



Employment of Persons with Disability - MEA meets Employers

A meeting was held at the Mediterranean Conference Centre on Thursday, 7th to update employers on recent developments on the issue of employment of disabled persons. The meeting was extremely well attended with representatives of more than 250 companies present.

Mr. Arthur Muscat (President – MEA) and Mr. Joseph Farrugia (Director General) addressed those present and reported on progress made and a number of issues that are still pending.

They said that it is contradictory that the ETC is publicly thanking companies who have paid the contribution when the real objective of the legislation should not be to raise funds but to increase the number of persons with a disability in employment. The MEA, on the other hand, is being consistent with its past policies and encourages employers to offer employment to disabled persons.

The speakers referred to a meeting held at that same morning with the KNPD chairman, the ETC chairman and the Chamber of Commerce

The MEA Secretariat:

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MEA members at the meeting held on 7th January 2016.

Enterprise and Industry. The event was cordial and led to positive developments. It was confirmed that for the purpose of quota computation, the KNPD register shall be considered together with the ETC register, and that an exercise is being conducted to amalgamate the databases. Companies who engage disabled persons through outsourcing will be able to include them in the quota, and that companies with disabled persons who are not registered will be able to make a case for exemption with ETC. These developments were welcomed along with other positive news that more companies have regularised themselves by employing persons with disability over the past months. Mr. Farrugia also gave an overview of legislation other EU countries, with some countries having compulsory quota schemes, others having no employment quotas, and a few who have quotas only for the public sector.

Numerous company representatives expressed various concerns about the contents of the legislation and

how it is being implemented. Many commented about the arrogant tone of the ETC communications. There were reports that ETC officials were threatening that the €10K capping on fines was only temporary and will be increased in future. Others stated that they received an invoice for 2015 even though they became compliant. A general concern was about the interpretation of the Data Protection Act, as it was argued that is unreasonable to expect employers to be kept in the dark about who is actually disabled within their labour force. Such a situation could expose the employees themselves, their co-workers and the company to considerable risks, besides leaving the company in a position whereby it could not prove or disprove whether it is compliant with the quota or otherwise. Another issue raised by companies that have offered job opportunities for disabled persons was that they were being sent long lists of registered persons with disability without any attempt at matching the applicants with the jobs available. Others contended that in many cases, persons interviewed

showed no interest in working after being offered the post, or else resigned within a short period after being employed, which rendered the company in breach of the legislation.

Employers have been directed to:

- 1. Make every effort to employ persons with disability in their companies, not only because it is a legal imposition, but as part of a socially responsible culture which has always prevailed in Malta.**
- 2. Withhold payment of the invoices issued by the Employment and Training Corporation until the outcome of further discussions and negotiations which will take place in the near future.**

On the positive Mr. Muscat revealed that a meeting between MEA and the Prime Minister is scheduled for the 15th January, 2016.