**Daily News Summary - 16.7.2020**

**BUDGET**

**Citizens call for a bigger EU budget to tackle crisis, new survey shows**

The Malta Business Weekly reports that a majority (56%) say the EU should have more financial means to overcome the impact of the pandemic. Public health tops the priority list, with economic recovery and climate change. In a new survey commissioned by the European Parliament and conducted in the second half of June, nearly seven out of 10 respondents (68%) want a stronger role for the EU in fighting this crisis. More than half (56%) believe this requires greater financial means for the EU, which should be directed primarily at tackling the impact of the pandemic on the health sector and the economy. Among Maltese respondents, 84% want a stronger role for the EU in fighting this crisis and 62% believe this requires greater financial means for the EU.  
  
  
*Malta-Business-Weekly: Citizens call for a bigger EU budget to tackle crisis, new survey shows / Citizens call for a bigger EU budget to tackle crisis, new survey shows page: 12 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*

**COMPETITION**

**Apple blow for EU**

Technology giant company Apple is not obliged to pay €13 billion in tax arrears to the Republic of Ireland after it succeeded in winning an appeal it had lodged with the second highest Court in the European Union. The Court yesterday revoked the decision taken by the European Commission in 2016 and concluded it had not been proven that Apple had breached competition rules. The decision is seen as a great blow to the European Union in its efforts to control alleged tax evasions. However, the European Commission still has the opportunity to appeal and contest the decision.  
  
  
[*TVM-Malta:*](https://www.tvm.com.mt) *"Apple blow for EU / Daqqa ta’ ħarta għall-UE dwar ..." info: L-ahbarijiet, 2020-07-16 05:52:00, 00:01:40, by Nigel Mifsud date: Thursday, July 16, 2020 5:52:00 AM CEST*

**ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

**Minister Edward Scicluna gives farewell speech on behalf of EU Finance Ministers**

Minister for Finance and Financial Services Edward Scicluna was chosen by the Eurogroup to deliver the farewell speech on the group’s behalf at Mario Centeno’s last Eurogroup meeting as president of the Eurogroup. The Eurogroup meeting was held on Thursday, 9 July. Prof. Centeno informed the Finance Ministers that he would be stepping down as Portugal’s Finance Minister and hence not seeking the second term as president of the Eurogroup.  
  
  
*Malta-Business-Weekly: Minister Edward Scicluna gives farewell speech on behalf of EU Finance Ministers / Minister Edward Scicluna gives farewell speech on behalf of EU Finance Ministers page: 9 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*

**Fitch Ratings has affirmed Malta’s long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating at ‘A+’ with a Stable Outlook**

The Malta Business Weekly today reports that credit rating agency Fitch Ratings has affirmed Malta’s long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating at ‘A+’ with a Stable Outlook. It also takes a look at the main drivers behind this decision. Malta’s ratings balance high income per capita, euro area membership and large net external creditor position, against its large banking sector, relatively high government contingent liabilities and vulnerability to shocks due to its small, open economy and reliance on tourism. Malta outperforms the ‘A’ median on the World Bank governance indicators, although its scores on the Voice and Accountability and Control of Corruption subcomponents have been slipping in recent years. Fitch forecasts Malta’s real GDP to contract by 6.9% in 2020, a moderate downward revision from the review in April (5.9%), with declining net exports playing a significant role. The tourism sector suffered a large contraction in 2Q20, owing to continued travel restrictions.  
  
  
*Malta-Business-Weekly: Fitch Ratings has affirmed Malta’s long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating at ‘A+’ with a Stable Outlook / Fitch Ratings has affirmed Malta’s long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating at ‘A+’ with a Stable Outlook page: 4 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*

**HEALTH**

**COVID-19 antibodies do not last long, but reinfection rate is low – Charmaine Gauci**

The Independent today leads with the news that Superintendent of Public Health Charmaine Gauci has stated that from current studies and findings, antibodies developed in patients who recovered from COVID-19 do not last long, but the reinfection rate is very low. “From our findings, we are seeing that antibodies in patients who recovered from COVID-19 do not last long, but when you look at the rates on an international level, we are noticing that the reinfection rate is low; meaning that reinfection is not very common.” As of Wednesday, Malta registered no new cases of Coronavirus, being the sixth consecutive day without any new cases. Currently Malta has registered a total of 674 cases of the virus, with only four active cases. 661 people recovered and 9 have died.  
  
  
[*Malta-Independent:*](https://www.independent.com.mt) *"COVID-19 antibodies do not last long, but reinfection rate is ..." page: 1 info: by Giulia Magri date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*   
  
[*Malta-Independent:*](https://www.independent.com.mt) *"Active cases down to four, as no new cases registered ..." page: 3 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*   
  
[*Malta-Times:*](https://www.timesofmalta.com) *COVID-19 Brussels urges EU to prepare for second wave / COVID-19 Brussels urges EU to prepare for second wave page: 9 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*

**HOME AFFAIRS / SECURITY UNION**

**Malta airport reopens for 28 more destinations**

Malta’s international airport yesterday reopened for twenty-eight other destinations as part of the government’s recovery plan. The reopened destinations include the Netherlands, Canada, Turkey and New Zealand. Nineteen destinations were declared during the first phase on 1 July. The opening of the airport has to date not resulted in any imported Covid-19 cases thanks to a rigorous testing system and other precautions, including a 14-day quarantine for incoming tourists from countries that still have high levels of infection. Public Health Superintendent Charmaine Gauci said the authorities had to eliminate some of the non-EU countries on the European Commission list of recommended destinations for the same reason.  
  
  
[*TVM-Malta:*](https://www.tvm.com.mt) *"Malta airport reopens for 28 more destinations / L-ajruport ta’ ..." info: L-ahbarijiet, 2020-07-16 05:50:00, 00:03:00, by Keith Demicoli date: Thursday, July 16, 2020 5:50:00 AM CEST*

**MEMBER STATES - INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**Executive president refutes Delia confidence-vote claim**

The Times of Malta leads with the news that the president of the PN’s executive committee has contradicted leader Adrian Delia’s claim that he cannot face another confidence vote before the party’s highest organ, the general council. Delia said yesterday that the council could not, under the terms of its new statute, hold another vote of confidence in his leadership. But Alex Perici Calascione told Times of Malta otherwise. “If anyone wishes to take this further, Delia himself may opt to seek a confidence vote from General Council or else others. They need to present a motion, signed by at least 150 councillors, to the executive with a question to be put to the general council,” Perici Calascione said. He was speaking after Delia lost the trust of both the executive committee and the parliamentary group in the space of a week. In the latest vote of confidence, 47 members of the executive committee said they did not support Delia while 35 backed him. Perici Calascione said that while Tuesday’s vote did not have “statutory consequence” it has “clear political considerations and implications.”  
  
  
*Malta-Business-Weekly: Another vote against PN Leader Adrian Delia who still refuses to leave / Another vote against PN Leader Adrian Delia who still refuses to leave page: 3 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*  
  
[*Malta-Independent:*](https://www.independent.com.mt) *"Louis Galea says Malta needs new PN leader / Louis ..." page: 1 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*   
  
[*Malta-Times:*](https://www.timesofmalta.com) *Executive president refutes Delia confidence-vote claim / Executive president refutes Delia confidence-vote claim page: 1,2 info: by Claire Caruana date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*  
  
[*timesofmalta.com:*](https://www.timesofmalta.com) *Inside the PN executive meeting that turned against Adrian Delia / Inside the PN executive meeting that turned against Adrian Delia info: by Editorial date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*

**RULE OF LAW AND CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS**

**Yorgen Fenech loses challenge over pardon**

The Times reports that Yorgen Fenech has failed in his bid to challenge the Cabinet’s decision denying him a presidential pardon, with the case faltering on a technical formality. In a judgment delivered yesterday, the First Hall of the Civil Court, presided over by Mr Justice Francesco Depasquale, upheld the plea which had been raised by the state advocate, assisting the cabinet of ministers and the police commissioner in the proceedings. Fenech’s lawyers had filed an application to obtain a judicial review of the Cabinet’s decision, without, however, preceding their action with a judicial letter or protest.  
  
  
[*Malta-Independent:*](https://www.independent.com.mt) *"‘It’s an environment of threats, journalists isolated’ / ‘It’s an ..." page: 3 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*   
  
[*Malta-Times:*](https://www.timesofmalta.com) *Yorgen Fenech loses challenge over pardon / Yorgen Fenech loses challenge over pardon page: 1,2 info: by Edwina Brincat date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*

**Judiciary is ‘opposed’ to impeachment proposals**

A report in today’s Times states that a Bill before the House of Representatives proposes removing parliament’s power to impeach magistrates and judges. Instead of the current two-thirds parliamentary majority required, the government is proposing that the decision will rest solely with the Commission for the Administration of Justice. However, according to the opposition, the judiciary is opposed to the proposed change, and it wants to know why.  The reform is one of 10 bills meant to implement the recommendations of a group of rule of law experts of the Council of Europe – the Venice Commission. The government is aiming to have these constitutional changes approved by parliament by the start of the summer recess at the end of this month. However, they cannot come into force unless the opposition is also on board.  
  
  
[*Malta-Times:*](https://www.timesofmalta.com) *Judiciary is ‘opposed’ to impeachment proposals / Judiciary is ‘opposed’ to impeachment proposals page: 7 info: by Keith Micallef date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*

**TAXATION**

**Malta faces possible attack on taxes by EU Commission**

The Malta Business Weekly today leads with the news that Malta faces a potential attack on its low-tax system by the EU Commission, the Financial Times reported on Tuesday. The huge amount of funding required by the novel coronavirus recovery plan has to be financed, and, according to the report, Brussels intends to pursue low-tax Member States over their advantageous corporate tax regimes. Normally Malta would be able to oppose such legislation. But the attack is planned to be based on alleged distortions of the Single Market (under Article 116 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which covers Internal Market policies). “Unlike ordinary tax legislation in the EU, the initiative would only require the backing of a qualified majority of the EU’s 27 Member States rather than unanimous support of all countries, restricting a government’s ability to wield a veto,” the article notes.  
  
  
*Malta-Business-Weekly: Malta faces possible attack on taxes by EU Commission / Malta faces possible attack on taxes by EU Commission page: 1 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 16, 2020*