**Daily News Summary - 23.7.2020**

**BUDGET**

**EU Budget: PM says no concession made on financial transaction tax**

Prime Minister Robert Abela has vehemently denied claims that Malta dropped its opposition to a financial transaction tax in exchange for a more generous EU budget. “This is just a proposal by the European Commission and Malta’s objection against such a measure has not changed,” Abela said in parliament on Wednesday. He was delivering a statement on the €2.25 billion budget agreement sealed in Brussels on Tuesday for the next seven years until 2027. The prime minister said that Malta had secured an even better deal than the previous seven-year budget (2013 and 2020), despite starting from a disadvantaged position. Abela noted that Malta’s robust economic growth in recent years meant that the initial allocation proposed by the European Commission in 2018 was a net gain of €242 million.  
  
  
*Malta-Business-Weekly: Malta allocated €2.25 billion in EU funds from new deal / Malta allocated €2.25 billion in EU funds from new deal page: 1 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*  
  
*Malta-Business-Weekly: State aid: Commission approves €108m Maltese scheme to support companies affected by Coronavirus outbreak / State aid: Commission approves €108m Maltese scheme to support companies affected by Coronavirus outbreak page: 6 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*  
  
[*timesofmalta.com:*](https://www.timesofmalta.com) *EU Budget: PM says no concession made on financial transaction tax / EU Budget: PM says no concession made on financial transaction tax info: by Editorial date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*  
  
[*TVM-Malta:*](https://www.tvm.com.mt) *"Malta acquires double the EU financial aid than acquired in ..." info: L-ahbarijiet, 2020-07-23 05:46:00, 00:02:00, by Nigel Mifsud date: Thursday, July 23, 2020 5:46:00 AM CEST*

**EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY**

**Libya and Mediterranean situation discussed between Foreign Ministers of Malta and Egypt**

The prevailing situation in Libya and the Mediterranean have been discussed by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Malta and Egypt. A Foreign Ministry statement said yesterday that Minister Evarist Bartolo discussed the issues during a telephone conversation with his Egyptian counterpart, Sameh Shoukry. The two ministers agreed on the urgent need for peace in Libya as well as the commitment to work together to solve problems through policies and not armaments. Minister Bartolo insisted Libya should be aided in its fight against human trafficking and irregular immigration, claiming also that the Central Mediterranean route to the south of Europe remains wide open, an area where the European Union is not protecting itself enough.  
  
  
[*TVM-Malta:*](https://www.tvm.com.mt) *"Libya and Mediterranean situation discussed between Foreign Ministers of Malta ..." info: L-ahbarijiet, 2020-07-23 05:48:00, 00:01:05, by Nigel Mifsud date: Thursday, July 23, 2020 5:48:00 AM CEST*

**FISHERIES**

**State aid: Commission approves €720,000 Maltese scheme to support Bluefin tuna fishermen**

The European Commission has approved a €720,000 Maltese scheme to support self-employed Bluefin tuna fishermen that are affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the state aid Temporary Framework. The public support will take the form of direct grants. The aid will be calculated based on the quota assigned by the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture to Bluefin tuna fishermen in 2020. The purpose of the scheme is to compensate the drop in the price of Bluefin tuna on the market and therefore help those fishermen to continue their activities after the outbreak. The Commission found that the Maltese scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the grants will not exceed €120,000 per beneficiary.  
  
  
*Malta-Business-Weekly: State aid: Commission approves €720,000 Maltese scheme to support Bluefin tuna fishermen / State aid: Commission approves €720,000 Maltese scheme to support Bluefin tuna fishermen page: 7 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*

**HEALTH**

**No arrivals at airport tested for coronavirus**

None of the passengers that have landed in Malta from so-called safe countries have had to be tested for COVID-19 so far, Superintendent of Public Health Charmaine Gauci has confirmed. Speaking during Times of Malta’s Ask Charmaine Facebook show, Gauci said thermal screening was being carried out at both the arrivals and departures lounges but there had been no need to test anyone yet. Passengers found to have a temperature of higher than 37.2 degrees Celsius must undergo a swab test. Two new cases of COVID-19 were picked up from tests carried out between Tuesday and yesterday. The cases were described by the health department as ‘sporadic’, with only one showing symptoms. In all, 1,016 tests were carried out in 24 hours. One patient recovered, leaving five active cases.  
  
  
[*Malta-Independent:*](https://www.independent.com.mt) *"Two new, sporadic cases, one recovery registered / Two new, ..." page: 4 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*   
  
[*Malta-Times:*](https://www.timesofmalta.com) *No arrivals at airport tested for coronavirus / No arrivals at airport tested for coronavirus page: 5 info: by Claire Caruana date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*

**MEMBER STATES - INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**Therese Comodini Cachia walks out of parliamentary group meeting**

The Times today reports that Therese Comodini Cachia walked out of a Nationalist Party parliamentary group meeting yesterday after party leader Adrian Delia refused to discuss the way forward with the group.  Comodini Cachia was earlier this month nominated to replace Delia as opposition leader after he lost a confidence vote among his parliamentary group. In comments to the media, she said that the party’s MPs had called for a discussion of the leadership’s future ahead of the executive meeting today. However, Delia refused to hold the talks, saying he would be discussing the way forward during this evening’s meeting. This prompted Comodini Cachia to leave the parliamentary group meeting.  Comodini Cachia said that considering recent developments, including the alleged attempted suicide of Daphne Caruana Galizia murder middleman Melvin Theuma, it was even more crucial to have a strong opposition.  
  
  
[*Malta-Independent:*](https://www.independent.com.mt) *"‘Rebel’ MPs walk out of meeting with Delia, PN executive ..." page: 1,2 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*   
  
[*Malta-Times:*](https://www.timesofmalta.com) *Therese Comodini Cachia walks out of parliamentary group meeting / Therese Comodini Cachia walks out of parliamentary group meeting page: 5 info: by Claire Caruana date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*

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

**Middleman Theuma critical but stable, unable to speak**

Most media today lead with the news that the state witness in the Daphne Caruana Galizia murder case is unable to speak after suffering damage to his vocal cords as well as multiple stab wounds in what police believe was a case of self-harm. Melvin Theuma, the self-confessed middleman in the plot to assassinate the prominent journalist, was found in a pool of blood at his Swieqi apartment on Tuesday night. Health Minister Chris Fearne told parliament yesterday that Theuma’s condition was critical but stable. The incident sent shockwaves through the country and initial speculation was rife over whether there had been an attempt to silence a key witness in the murder case. But barely 12 hours after the incident, Police Commissioner Angelo Gafá told reporters that preliminary evidence pointed to the likelihood that Theuma had harmed himself. Yesterday afternoon, Theuma was conscious after undergoing surgery to his voice box. He also had multiple stab wounds below the kidneys, a slit throat and cuts to his left wrist.  
  
  
[*Malta-Independent:*](https://www.independent.com.mt) *"Melvin Theuma told inspector that his wounds were self-inflicted / ..." page: 1,4 info: by KEVIN SCHEMBRI ORLAND & GIULIA MAGRI date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*   
  
[*Malta-Independent:*](https://www.independent.com.mt) *"Melvin Theuma’s presidential pardon drafted “from A to Z” by ..." page: 2 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*   
  
[*Malta-Times:*](https://www.timesofmalta.com) *Middleman Theuma critical but stable, unable to speak / Middleman Theuma critical but stable, unable to speak page: 1,2 info: by Ivan Martin date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*  
  
[*Malta-Times:*](https://www.timesofmalta.com) *Tapes to be heard in private / Tapes to be heard in private page: 1,4 info: by Edwina Brincat date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*

**European Commission wants an investigation on the Montenegro deal**

The Malta Business Weekly reports today that the European Commission has said it expects the Mozura wind farm deal in Montenegro to be reviewed by independent and professional institutions in an investigation that may carry implications for those in Malta involved in the project. Speaking to journalists in Montenegro, a candidate country to join the EU, a spokesperson for the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations was critical of the speaker’s refusal to allow a parliamentary debate on the project. Speaker Ivan Brajovic last month rejected a motion to set up a parliamentary committee to investigate the Mozura wind farm and its links to Yorgen Fenech and 17 Black, following the publication of findings by Reuters, also published in The Times of Malta. The speaker had justified this decision on the grounds that the motion was only signed by 24 MPs when procedural rules state 27 signatures are required.  
  
  
*Malta-Business-Weekly: European Commission wants an investigation on the Montenegro deal / European Commission wants an investigation on the Montenegro deal page: 7 info: by NA date: Thursday, July 23, 2020*