

The Malta Crafts Act

Malta Crafts Foundation

Public Consultation

1. Introduction

During the last five years local artisans were given the opportunity to participate in 180 fairs across the Maltese Islands, 50 of these, together with a number of exhibitions were directly organised and funded by the Ministry for the Economy Investment and Small Businesses through the Commerce Department. In addition, financial assistance was provided to enable annual participation in Europe's largest artisan fair -L'Artigiano in Fiera- while €365,000 was disbursed via the "Premju Ġieħ l-Artigjanat Malti" awards held every year in recognition of innovative artisan products and initiatives to promote crafts, measures aimed at increasing inclusivity and integration through crafts as well as artisans with a long career dedicated to crafts.

The above was complemented by the Commerce Department's launching of the "Malta Crafts Mobile Application" and a new certification tag for artisanal products with a quick response code (QR Code) individually assigned to registered artisans. This code, once scanned via the mobile app, can link the customer to the artisans' site on the new mobile responsive Malta Crafts portal, which went live in 2018, providing not only details and the business location of the crafts-persons but also a shop window to their other works.

It is worth noting that within this context, the Ministry for the Economy Investment and Small Businesses is spearheading a 10 million euro EU funded project aimed at converting the "Ta' Qali Crafts Village" into a centre of excellence for the country's artisanal skills.

All the above actions and initiatives have been aimed at enhancing and sustaining the craft sector. It is with this frame of mind that Government is now proposing a new Malta Crafts Act with the scope of revising the national set up relating to the promotion, preservation and appreciation of local crafts and in doing so replacing the Malta Crafts Council Act.

2. Background

Currently the main legislation concerning crafts is the Malta Crafts Council Act (Cap 421) which however focuses more on the operations of the Malta Crafts Council rather than crafts, vesting it with a number of functions, powers and duties related to craft. The Act stipulates that the Council is to be made up of a number of representatives of various ministries and three representatives to be elected by and from among crafts-persons registered with the Council.

Regretfully, since the enactment of the Act in question, it has always been difficult to find crafts-persons who were in a position to participate in the Council elections. Moreover, since those who were elected practised specific crafts there frequently was an inadequate representation of the crafts spectrum. This shortcoming resulted, contrary to what was intended, in there never being a proper and effective consultation structure within the Council and it was only with the intervention of the Commerce Department that consultation has been possible.

In addition to the above, the Malta Crafts Council Act is lacking in that it does not provide the Malta Crafts Council with a formal administrative and operational set up to assist it in the carrying out of its duties. As a result, while the Council meets regularly once a month to register new crafts-persons and to put forward proposals in line with its remit, it is the Commerce Department which, over the years, has executed most of the decisions taken by the Council in addition to the planing and implementation of other initiatives which did not emanate from Council meetings.

Finally, the Malta Crafts Council Act does not empower the Council to take any action in the case of transgressions involving products falsely purporting to Maltese crafts, not even when such transgressions are committed by registered crafts-persons. Unfortunately, the Act does not empower the Council to strike off its register crafts-persons who either violate rules and/or conditions established by the Council or the Department or crafts-persons who are in breach of any of the provisions of the Act and/or its Regulations.

3. Proposed New Act

The proposed new Malta Crafts Act does away with the Malta Crafts Council providing instead for the creation of an Office of the Registrar of Crafts which shall be obliged to ensure that crafts-persons be consulted regularly on matters related to the sector through the creation of sub-committees which may be thematic or sectorial.

The Office shall incorporate those duties which currently fall under the remit of the Council but also include additional functions as follows:

(a) to maintain a register of crafts, crafts-persons and crafts entrepreneurs that shall be registered according to criteria which may be prescribed from time to time:

Provided that when creating such register, there shall be consideration of the crafts-persons and entrepreneurs previously registered under the Malta Crafts Council Act and determination as to who of these are to be automatically registered, who shall no longer be deemed as registered and who will be asked to apply again for registration:

Provided further that the Office can create different categories of registration in relation to the crafts sector;

(b) to affect possible expulsions and deregistration of registered crafts-persons who infringe this Act;

(c) to establish and maintain a voluntary certification system of craft products which are in compliance with the definition of crafts provided in this Act;

(d) to enforce specific regulations in relation to the Crafts Register and events organised by the Registrar, including any enforceable sanctions which would result if such regulations are not adhered to by a registered crafts-person or crafts-persons;

(e) to co-operate with the Malta Crafts Foundation and explore ways to jointly undertake initiatives to the benefit of local crafts-persons;

(f) to keep abreast with European and international developments in the field of crafts and to participate in the relevant fora as necessary;

(g) to report to the appropriate authorities, possible infringements which are brought to its attention and to commission investigations,

surveillance and inspections in relation to the authenticity of craft products;

(h) to take and propose actions aimed at raising the standard and profile of the craft sector in Malta;

(i) to contribute as necessary to the drawing up of legislation and in the formulation of a national policy on crafts; and

(j) to undertake other tasks which may be required in relation to the crafts sector.

4. Malta Crafts Foundation

With a view to enhance the promotion of the crafts sector, in addition to the Crafts Act being proposed there shall also be established a Malta Crafts Foundation which shall inter alia be responsible

a) To promote a steady interest, appreciation and promotion of Maltese crafts in particular and in Maltese crafts in general among all sectors of the community both resident and foreign;

b) To support and safeguard the interests of crafts-persons through the promotion of studies for the identification of raw materials, design, market research and sales programs;

c) To promote the revival of traditional Maltese crafts;

d) To establish international contacts with the aim of enhancing Maltese crafts;

e) To promote the creation of opportunities for the production of Maltese craft products;

f) To create opportunities for the promotion, sale and recognition of authentic Maltese craft products and to promote such opportunities;

g) To support the preservation and promotion of traditional Maltese crafts;

h) To keep abreast with European and international developments in the field of crafts and to participate in the relevant fora as necessary;

- i) To stimulate innovation in Maltese crafts with the creation of training opportunities for the different sectors;
- j) To collaborate with various Educational Institutions in the promotion of Maltese crafts and artisan skills;
- k) To promote the development of artisan skills amongst students and young people, including by means of appropriate training and education;
- l) To promote placements and internships of students in the crafts sector;
- m) To provide opportunities for the professional development of Maltese crafts-persons and the development of their products;
- n) To tap into European funds and European funded projects in the achievement of the assigned responsibilities;
- o) To undertake other tasks which may be required in relation to the promotion of the crafts sector:

5. Your Suggestions

Those interested in contributing to this initiative are kindly being invited to submit any ideas, suggestions and comments on the proposals in this document on matlacrafts@gov.mt with a view to continue on the road to progress in this sector
