

MALTA

COUNTRY BUSINESS FEATURE

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Celebrating fifty years of Malta-UAE ties



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 VALLETTA





OVERVIEW



Malta and the UAE celebrate half a century of bilateral ties

The 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Malta and the UAE highlights the close bonds that promote the continued development and prosperity of both nations.

An urban oasis spanned by a shining geometric dome on the edge of the Arabian Gulf might seem an unlikely setting for the reunion of two treasures from the ancient world.

And yet under the exquisite filigree canopy of Abu Dhabi's iconic Louvre Museum stand the Cippi – twin pillars of Maltese origin, dating to the 2nd Century BC – reunited after a 241-year separation.

That the Cippi – which were once used to decipher Phoenician script – are together again is a testament to the power of international culture and diplomacy. It is also a symbol of the long-standing bilateral relationship between Malta and the United

Arab Emirates, whose 50-year milestone was marked at a recent celebration held in Abu Dhabi in October this year.

MALTA PUNCHES WELL ABOVE ITS WEIGHT, PROFESSIONALLY, CULTURALLY AND COMMERCIALY.

The event, attended by Maltese nationals, Emirati and international dignitaries from every political, social and cultural sphere, showcased the shared commit-

ments between the two nations and signalled fresh prospects for future collaborations in Malta's travel and tourism, digital, infrastructure and cultural sectors.

The anniversary crowned a year of landmark events. In April, Malta and the UAE signed formal cooperation agreements for sectors including maritime, culture and sports, while in June UAE President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan met George Vella, President of Malta on an official visit to kickstart further discussions on sustainable development and growth opportunities between the two nations.

Over the last century or so, Malta has built an enviable reputation as a premier

FAST FACTS

316 sq km
The combined area of Malta, Gozo and Comino

\$61,939
Malta's GDP per capita in 2023, adjusted by PPP.

88%
Percentage of Maltese people who speak English

516,000
Population size

2.8 million
Number of tourists visiting Malta each year

Sources: Malta Uncovered, Visit Malta



Q&A

THE HON. AARON FARRUGIA
MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL PROJECTS,



Malta's Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects, Dr. Aaron Farrugia, discusses Malta's attractiveness for UAE investors.

Q: What is your vision for Malta's transport and infrastructure sectors?

Because the Maltese economy is transitioning into a less labour-intensive landscape, we're focusing on attracting industries that are characterised by high value-added activities – like the maritime and aviation sectors. We particularly see great potential in Malta's thriving superyacht industry.

adapt to industry shifts and evolving business practices, ensuring that we stay aligned with emerging trends and changes. Malta has been the fastest-growing economy in the EU since 2013.

Q: Considering the UAE's significant contributions to Malta's travel and tourism ecosystem, what are the most promising investment opportunities?

Malta already welcomes nearly three million tourists a year, but recent projections show that we need the infrastructure to cater to many more in the years to come. We have a reliable digital and fiscal framework that draws businesses from around the globe and the government is known for its pro-business stance and investor-friendly policies.

"WE URGE COMPANIES TO COME TO MALTA AND TEST THEIR NEW PRODUCTS."

Q: What are your current priorities?

In order to grow the economy, we must prioritise modernisation. This means not only improving essential infrastructure like roads, water, and electricity, but also enhancing the quality of services we provide to our citizens.

Q: How is your ministry fostering opportunities for FDI in transport, infrastructure, and capital projects?

Investors see us as a gateway to both the EU and Africa. Opportunities abound across various sectors, particularly in aviation and maritime infrastructure development. Given their exceptional expertise in construction, Gulf companies can capitalise on infrastructure projects here.

Q: How would you like your country to be perceived by the international community and specifically, by its partners like the UAE?

There are so many opportunities in manufacturing, tourism, and a sustainable economy between Malta and the UAE. Our compact size gives us the agility to swiftly

Q: How do you envision technology, especially in terms of digital advancements, enhancing the transport, infrastructure, and capital projects in a sustainable way?

We are working with international partners for signature projects like the shore-to-ship initiative in the Grand Harbour, which will decrease ship emissions by more than 80%. If our current tests are successful, we'll extend the development to other areas of the port. It's imperative, though, that we establish a practical and adaptable process that allows us to maintain our competitive edge while embracing modern technology and addressing evolving requirements.

Q: What messages will your Ministry take to COP28 this November in Dubai?

Our attention within the transport sector is firmly fixed on two key movements: digitalisation and decarbonisation. Right now, the imperative is to advocate for accountability in meeting these commitments.



Photos: Malta Tourism Authority

tourist destination, but in recent years it is also proving to be a draw for investors attracted by its stable economy, strategic location and quality of life.

In fact, Malta punches well above its weight, professionally, culturally and commercially. Although among the smallest countries in Europe, it is, nevertheless, home to a vibrant startup ecosystem that thrives in a climate of entrepreneurship and innovation – next year's prestigious EU-Startups Summit is scheduled to take place here.

The country's tech sector is especially buoyant, with companies in AI, Big Data and IoT gaining ground in international markets; Malta has already become a force to be reckoned with in gaming and blockchain evolution.

But it is Malta's future-facing ethos that particularly appeals to businesses seeking growth opportunities here. The country offers a favourable legislative framework that delivers valuable incentives – in the form of tax benefits and grants – for startups engaged in research and development, which helps new businesses to focus on innovation.

As an EU member state, Malta benefits from free movement of people, goods,

services, and capital across the bloc, as well as a harmonised regulatory framework that promotes cross-border business opportunities.

Importantly, the archipelago's southern Mediterranean location means that it is well placed to serve EU, Middle Eastern and North African markets. With English widely spoken here, communication for international entrepreneurs and businesses is simplified, enabling easier collaboration with partners and customers from around the world.

The Maltese government is fully committed to progressing the country's green agenda. The recent Heads of State meeting in Abu Dhabi included a discussion on the priorities of the COP28 climate conference, which will be hosted in the capital later this year. Malta and the UAE are actively seeking ways to help tackle climate change.

With Malta's economy evolving at pace, there is a valuable new opportunity here. A chance to deepen bilateral relationships between the two countries, to broker innovative investments, and to forge sustainable new approaches to development that will, hopefully, spark another 50 years of successful collaboration.



MALTA

MALTA-UAE BILATERAL RELATIONS TIMELINE

1973

Diplomatic relationship between Malta and the UAE officially established at the United Nations, New York.

1978

Landmark 28-million Dirhams loan approved from the UAE to Malta for proposed port expansion.

2018

UAE launches Government Experience Exchange Programme to develop international knowledge-based partnerships.

2023

Malta and the UAE celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two nations.



UAE