

# Bleak times – depression at the Grand Harbour

JAMES DEBONO analyses the topography of our social welfare system – where does the tax money paid in benefits and invalidity pensions go?

14% of people living in the inner harbour area – the eight towns surrounding the Grand Harbour – are either unemployed or in receipt of some form of social assistance.

The figures, presented in the House of Representatives earlier this week, paint a picture of a depressed region in and around Valletta and the Three Cities, where welfare payments are generally double that of the national average.

The inner harbour area (Valletta, Floriana, Marsa, Vittoriosa, Senglea, Cospicua, Kalkara, and Xghajra) boasts the highest number of people receiving mean-tested benefits, such as social assistance to single parents and sickness benefits. 7% of those living in the Grand Harbour receive a sickness allowance, and nearly 4% are unemployed.

But in Gozo, where 10% of its population is either unemployed or receiving benefits, there is a higher percentage of inactive or welfare-dependent people, thanks to an abnormal high number of invalidity pensions and a high number of people who have been unemployed for over a year.

## Invalid Gozitans

A breakdown by locality reveals that Grand Harbour and Gozitan localities top the benefit league tables.

All top ten localities with the highest number of people living on invalidity pension hail from Gozo, with the small village of Ghasri topping the list with 4.5% of its entire population in receipt of an invalidity pension.

915 Gozitans (or 3.1% of the entire Gozitan population) receive an invalidity pension – compared to just 1.5% of the Maltese population who receive this benefit.

In 2008, only 32 Gozitans were boarded out – a figure which reflects the percentage of Gozitans in the Maltese population. But despite a clampdown which saw the number of Gozitan 'invalids' fall from 1,053 to 915, the State is still paying for a disproportionate number of invalidity



pensions issued to Gozitans in previous years.

Invalidity pensions to Gozo represent 15.5% of all total claims for this pension, despite the fact that Gozitans account for 7.6% of the national population.

Nationally, the total number of people receiving an invalidity pension has fallen from 6,969 in 2008 to 5,905 in 2009 (16%).

## Sickly south

Marsa, Bormla and Valletta register the highest rate of people receiving sickness allowance. In each of these three localities more than 8% of the locality's population receives this benefit.

15.6% of all claims for sickness assistance are made by residents living in towns bordering the Grand Harbour. This could be a reflection of lower incomes in this part of Malta, because this benefit is means-tested.

Seven of the top ten localities with the highest number of persons receiving a sickness allowance hail from the Grand Harbour, where 7.2% of the Maltese population lives.

The small village of Xghajra, which lies on the outskirts of Zabbar, near Cottonera, tops the rate of recipients of single-parent benefits (2.5% of the total population) followed by Bormla (2.4%) and Valletta (2.1%).

## Grand Harbour - 20% of single parents

517 single parents hail from the eight towns surrounding the Grand Harbour. They account for 20% of the 2,599 recipients of the means-tested single parent benefit. On the other hand, only 68 Gozitan single parents, 0.2% of the total number of recipients are eligible for this benefit. Eight of the 10 localities with the highest rate of recipients of single parent benefits border the Grand Harbour. Since this benefit is means-tested, this is also an indication of lower incomes.

## Gozo's Zebbug - mostly unemployed

For the third consecutive year, the Gozitan locality of Zebbug registers the highest unemployment rate with 5.1% of its population registering for work. Zebbug also boasts the highest percentage of people who have been registering for work for more than a year. These amount to 3.3% of Zebbug's population. 395 Gozitans have been without a job for over a year. While only 35.9% of Malta's unemployed have been without a job for more than a year, the figure rises to 52.4% in Gozo.

In fact, Gozitans account for 16% of the total number of people who have been registering for more than a year. Long-term unemployment

## HIGHEST RECIPIENTS OF INVALIDITY PENSION

(% of locality's total population, December 2008)

Locality	%
Ghasri	4.5
Xewkija	4.2
Fontana	3.2
Kercem	3.2
Xghajra	3.1
Ghajnsielem	3.1
Nadur	3.1
Qala	3
Rabat, Gozo	3
Sannat	2.9

## HIGHEST RECIPIENTS OF SICKNESS BENEFITS

(% of locality's total population, December 2008)

Locality	%
Marsa	8.7
Bormla	8.3
Valletta	8.2
Hamrun	7.4
Floriana	7.3
Isla	6.8
Birgu	5.4
Paola	5.2
Gzira	4.9
Zebbug, Gozo	4.8

## HIGHEST SINGLE PARENT RECIPIENTS

(% of locality's total population, December 2008)

Locality	%
Xghajra	2.5
Bormla	2.4
Valletta	2.1
Isla	2
Floriana	1.4
Marsa	1.4
Birgu	1.4
Gzira	1.3
Santa Venera	1.2
Pembroke	1.2

## HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT

(% of locality's total population, December 2008)

Locality	%
Zebbug, Gozo	5.1
Valletta	4.7
Isla	4.6
Bormla	4.5
Munxar	4.1
Birgu	3.3
Xghajra	3.1
Floriana	2.9
Nadur	2.8
Ghajnsielem	2.7

## HIGHEST LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT - REGISTERING FOR MORE THAN A YEAR

(Unemployed as per May 2009, as % of locality's total population, December 2008)

Locality	%
Zebbug, Gozo	3.3
Valletta	2.3
Munxar	2
Isla	1.8
San Lawrenz	1.8
Xghajra	1.6
Floriana	1.5
Bormla	1.5
Nadur	1.5
Ghajnsielem	1.3

## HIGHEST SHORT-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT - REGISTERING FOR LESS THAN A YEAR

(Unemployed as per May 2009, as % of locality's total population, December 2008)

Locality	%
Isla	3.9
Bormla	3
Valletta	2.4
Munxar	2.1
Kalkara	2.1
Birgu	2.1
Xghajra	2
Zebbug, Gozo	1.7
Saint Paul's Bay	1.6
Zejtun	1.6

is also a problem in the eight towns surrounding the Grand Harbour, which account for 18% of all those registering for work

for more than a year. This is an indication that a large number of people in both regions are trapped in welfare dependency.

## MAPPING MALTA'S WELFARE NATION

### UNEMPLOYED AND WELFARE RECIPIENTS (%)

	Gozo	Inner harbour	TOTAL Malta/Gozo
Unemployed	2.5	3.7	1.7
Invalidity pension	3.1	1.5	1.5
Single parent benefits	0.22	7.1	0.7
Sickness assistance	4	1.8	3.3
Total	9.8	14.1	7.2

(Percentage of population as quoted in 2008 demographic review – Inner harbour region includes Valletta, Floriana, Marsa, Birgu, Isla, Bormla, Kalkara, Xghajra)

### UNEMPLOYED AND WELFARE RECIPIENTS (in numbers)

	Gozo	Inner Harbour	Malta/Gozo
Unemployed	738	1,063	6,777
Invalidity pension	915	429	5,905
Single parent benefits	68	2,037	2,599
Sickness assistance	1,203	517	13,060
Total	2,905	4,046	28,341

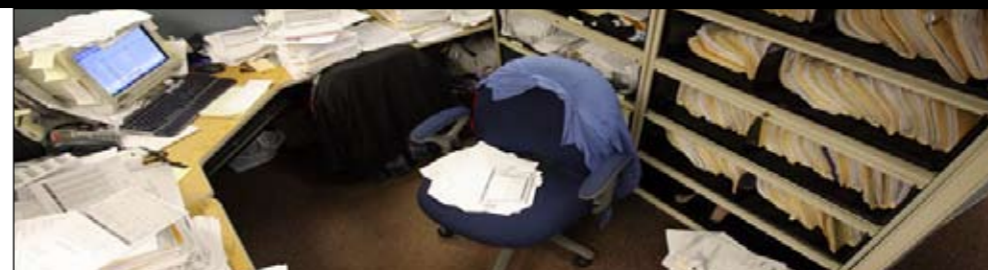
### INNER HARBOUR, GOZO RECIPIENTS (as % of total welfare recipients)

	Inner harbour	Gozo
% of total invalidity pension	7.3	15.5
% of total sickness benefits	15.6	9.2
% of total single parent benefits	20	2.6
% of total unemployed	15.7	11.1
% of long-term unemployed	17.5	16.2
% of short-term unemployed	14.7	8.3

## LOWEST NUMBER OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

(% of total university entrants for 2009)

Locality	%
Marsa	0.2
Birgu	0.24
Isla	0.24
Bormla	0.3
Floriana	0.3



employment rate are Gozitan while six border the Grand Harbour.

This depressive state of affairs in the harbour area is also reflected in low educational achievement, with only 59 students (a sheer 2.3% of the total) from this region entering university.

Senglea has the highest rate of persons registering for work for less than a year (3.9%) followed by Valletta (2.3%). Four of the ten localities with the highest unem-

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## SALE OF PREMISES

### VALLETTA

The Government Property Division notifies that offers are being accepted for the sale tale quale of Premises No 179 St Lucy Street, Valletta, through a tender process.

This property consists of four (4) overlying floors, having a footprint of 29m<sup>2</sup>.

Interested parties may purchase tender documents from the Land Department, Auberge de Bavière, Valletta against a fee of €50.

Property Drawing is displayed on the Notice Boards at the Auberge de Bavière, Valletta.

Other details may be obtained from Advert No. 151 by the Land Department that is published on the Government Gazette issue of the 2nd October, 2009.

Closing date: 22nd October 2009



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## GLOSSARY

### Sickness Assistance

People suffering from a disease whose treatment requires exceptional expenditure and who qualify through a means test are eligible for Sickness Assistance. All claimants are examined by a Medical Panel. Sickness Assistance is paid every four weeks in advance. The weekly rates are €20.15 for the first member of the household and €15.02 for any other member of the same household.

### Invalidity pension

Anyone certified by a Medical Panel as being incapable for suitable full-time or regular part-time employment due to a serious disease or bodily or mental impairment. Recipients cannot engage in gainful occupation while receiving Invalidity Pension.

### Single Parents social assistance

Any single parent earning more than €48.12 per week is not entitled for Social Assistance. The maximum rate of assistance is €90.78 per week for a parent with one child. This is increased by a further €8.15 per week for each additional child. If rent is paid for the house of residence, an allowance of €1.16 per week is added to the entitlement. A weekly additional bonus of €3.12 and a six monthly bonus of €135.10 is payable to beneficiaries of Social Assistance.

### Unemployment Benefit

Persons who have paid national insurance contributions may be entitled to receive unemployment benefits. Claimants are entitled to a one-day benefit of €6.48 for each National Insurance contribution paid per day. If maintaining a spouse who is unemployed, or a single parent, the rate payable is €9.90 per day. Unemployed persons can also be eligible to a means tested unemployment assistance benefit.

## ESF 60 Youth Employment Programme Tender



The Employment and Training Corporation notifies that sealed tenders will be received for the following:

### SERVICE TENDER FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A PSYCHOLOGIST

FOR THE ESF 60 - YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME (ESF60/YEP/05/09)

Copies of the tender documents may be obtained from the ETC Finance Division in Hal Far, during week days, between 08:00hrs and 12:00hrs. A request to receive an electronic copy can be made by email to Martin Casha at [martin.g.casha@gov.mt](mailto:martin.g.casha@gov.mt) or by fax on 2220 1841.

Tenders, complete with all required documents, are to be submitted at the tender box at the ETC Head Office in Hal Far by not later than 10:00hrs of Tuesday, 3rd November 2009.

The tender title and code as stated above should be stated on the sealed envelope. These are to be addressed to:

The Chief Executive Officer  
Head Office  
Hal Far BBG 3000

ESF 60 - Youth Employment Programme

Operational Programme II – Cohesion Policy 2007-2013  
Empowering People for More Jobs and a Better Quality of Life  
Tenders part-financed by the European Union  
European Social Fund (ESF)  
Co-financing: 85% EU Funds; 15% National Funds



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