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# Press Release

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**SPEECH BY THE HON. AUSTIN GATT, MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE,  
TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS, AT THE CERTIPILOT INTERNATIONAL  
CONSULTATION EVENT – ST. JULIAN’S - FRIDAY 20 JULY, 2012**

It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to address this consultation event.

When we are discussing maritime pilotage, we are addressing port management and specifically port safety. The safe and effective operation of ports in Malta is not only crucial for the livelihood of the population and the sustainability of our industry, but in line with Governments' vision ports play a very important role in providing a platform for maritime services that give added value.

Government fully supports initiatives such as this one taken by the Malta Maritime Pilots who are not simply participating, but leading the CERTIPILOT project.

This project proves in a practical and tangible way the benefits of EU membership and a smart way of making use of the Lifelong Learning Programme. In this case the availability of funds combined with the right idea have created an opportunity for professional development in a very specialised area which, in this case, will contribute to improved standards of service that should in return enhance the safety, efficiency and competitiveness of our ports.

The Malta Maritime Pilots Co-operative should be a benchmark to cooperatives or similar organisations. Since the establishment of the Coop in 2003 the Maritime Pilots have always worked closely with the Maritime Authority and more recently with Transport Malta to anticipate the needs of industry. They have invested a considerable part of their earnings to ensure that they provide the highest level of service. This investment includes:

- The upgrade of the pilots boats including the investment in two new state of the art pilot boats. This entailed a total investment of €2 M. Pilots now manage a fleet of 6 Pilot Boats that guarantee the continuity and reliability of the service. In addition the Pilots have already committed themselves to procure an additional Pilot boat in the next 5 years to ensure that our ports and service provided remain competitive. The fleet of pilot boats also generated jobs with some 25 full time jobs as management and crew.
- Each individual pilot has received the highest level of professional training available on the market including training using manned models at Port Revel ship handling training centre in France which cost circa € 200 000.
- The setting up of a Maritime Research Centre including a state of the art ship simulator that allows training in the local scenario, primarily pilotage and ship handling in the ports of

Valletta and Marsaxlokk. As one can appreciate developments in ICT is ongoing and therefore this requires regular upgrades both in terms of hardware and software and to date this investment has amounted to circa € 1M.

During 2011 11 750 ships called in Maltese ports or were rendered a service in Maltese waters, just under 4000 (3 983) made use of the Pilotage service.

In the first 6months of this year (Jan-June) a total of 5129 ships called Maltese ports or were rendered a service in Maltese waters. 1710 made use of the Pilotage service. During the last 18 months 374 of these ships were over 300 metres in length and these were either cruise liners calling at the Cruise Terminal in Valletta or containerships calling for transshipment operations at the Mata Freeport. These figures give some insight to the importance of ports and shipping to the local economy. When discussing the economic benefits of shipping, it is not only passengers and cargo operations that should be taken into account, but also all the ancillary services rendered to the ships that, apart from pilotage, including the vessel traffic services (VTS) and Port Control managed by the Ports and Yachting Directorate of Transport Malta, the provision of mooring and towage services, bunkers, stores, repairs and surveys and a multitude of other services that generate hundreds of jobs and in fact our challenge is to ensure that Malta produces a work force with the right attributes and expertise to ensure that we can sustain the demands of the shipping industry.

Government is also aware of the importance of maintaining the maritime infrastructure and projects underway include the Cirkewwa Ferry Terminal, the refurbishment of the Valletta and Marsaxlokk Breakwaters and the refurbishment and upgrading of Deep Water Quay.

Thanks to this project, pilots will be able to have a common framework for their vocational training. In practical terms this means that CERTPILOT paves the ground for mutual recognition of maritime pilots' vocational training undertaken in all those countries who will decide to adopt this system. Moreover, in a world where ports and nautical services need to constantly adapt to the demands of shipping, it is a very useful tool to understand not only which skills and competences need to be enhanced, but also what type of training needs to be developed.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Malta Maritime Pilots and their Italian, Spanish and Turkish colleagues' success with this project.

I am sure that CERTPILOT will, once completed and put in practice, contribute to further develop the concept of Malta as a maritime hub and a centre of excellence for maritime services as well as enhance the safety and environmental protection of the Maltese ports.