

# Government Property Division Joint Office

As from November 2001 the Joint Office was amalgamated to form part of the Government Property Division under the Ministry for Home Affairs. The Joint Office has two roles, namely:

a) managing and administering the estate transferred to Government by the ecclesiastical authorities in terms of the Ecclesiastical Entities (Properties) Act Cap. 358;

b) validating and verifying the data being transferred to it by the ecclesiastical entities. The scope being to determine the exact value of all the properties transferred so that the necessary adjustments will be made to the original amount of Lm28,067,000 which the Government issued in Bonds in terms of the 1991 Agreement with the Ecclesiastical Authorities.

## PROPERTY ADMINISTRATION

### Transfer of Properties

In the year 2001 the following properties were alienated:

Leased properties sold (Schemes)	20
Perpetual revisable ground rents redeemed (1996 Scheme)	6
Temporary ground rents redeemed (1996 Scheme)	206
Redemption of ground rents 'ex-contractu'	36
Sold by tender	<u>15</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>283</u></b>

Premises at 43 and 44 Tower Road, Msida were transferred to the Housing Authority to be developed for social housing in terms of Article 2 of the agreement between the Government and the Holy See. Plots were leased to Enemalta Corporation to build substations to improve electricity supply in certain areas.

The Department also received and processed requests from tenants for recognition.

## Other Schemes

Late in the year 2001 the Ministry for Home Affairs announced that it was putting on the market all the property being administered by the Joint Office and which is either resident-occupied or used as a summer residence. Both the selling price and the redemption price of the emphyteusis are to be established by the Joint Office.

Up to the end of the year, 392 applications were received as a result of the above announcement.

The scheme introduced during the previous year, offering the possibility to those who occupy Government land for agricultural purposes without a title to regularise their position, closed in February 2001.

## Repair of Leased Properties

The Department also processed requests for the repair of leased properties. Agreement was reached with the Housing Construction & Maintenance Department to replace dangerous roofs on behalf of the Joint Office. In fact a block of apartments in Zimelli Street, Hamrun which was in a very dangerous condition was repaired

## RECONCILIATION, VERIFICATION AND REGISTRATION

### Transfer of Information on Properties

During the year 2001, the transfer of information from the Church Administrative Offices to the Joint Office regarding the properties transferred to the Government by the Church continued at a steady pace. Up to the end of this year, 21,246 property forms concerning properties listed in Annex 8 were forwarded to the Joint Office by the ecclesiastical entities.

It is to be noted, however, that a large number of corrections had to be raised or confirmed regarding this information, which corrections, had to be approved by the Control Committee in terms of Section 4 (2) of the Agreement. This inevitable procedure necessarily slowed down the work involving reconciliation, verification and registration. These corrections entail additions of properties inadvertently left out of the Annexes to the Agreement, deletion of others that were erroneously included, and corrections to the capitalised amounts of properties.

## Registration of Properties

The Department continued with the registration of property with the Land Registry in terms of Cap 358. 773 properties were registered during the year under review. This brought the total number of registrations as on 31 December 2001 to 5,594.

## New Database

During the year under review, the Joint Office introduced a new property database. This is made up of data that was electronically transferred from the Archdiocese of Malta to the Joint Office together with computerised information which Joint Office staff had over the years compiled from various sources into the two previous computer systems.

In the implementation of this new computerised database, the recommendations of the members of the Control Committee were also taken into account. Up to the end of the year, about 5,000 items of property were entered into the new system in connection with the reconciliation of the stock issued by the Government in February 1993 in favour of the ecclesiastical entities

## ADMINISTRATION

### Revenue Collection

The following table shows the comparative figure of revenue collected during the past three years:

	1999 Lm	2000 Lm	2001 Lm
Rent	408,948	405,253	375,752
Sales	<u>604,882</u>	<u>900,716</u>	<u>1,287,289</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,013,830</b>	<b>1,305,969</b>	<b>1,663,041*</b>

\* The Estimate of Revenue 2001 arising from rents, ground rents and *qbiela* was placed at Lm300,000. However by the end of 2001, the sum of Lm375,752 was collected, i.e. Lm75,752 more than the anticipated amount. The approved estimate revenue from sales which was Lm1,000,000 was also exceeded by Lm287,289.

During this year the Joint Office gave particular attention to the collection of arrears of ground rent.

### The Control Committee

The Control Committee is a body set up in terms of Article 17 of the 1991 of the Agreement between the

Holy See and the Government of Malta. Two members of the Committee are nominated by the Holy See and two Members are nominated by the Government of Malta. Chairmanship of meetings is by rotation.

The functions of the Control Committee are promoting and monitoring the correct and timely application of the provisions of the above-mentioned Agreement with particular reference to the approval of corrections to the Annexes; and the alienation of property in particular to bonds that have to be issued to the Foundation for Church Schools. The Control Committee met nine times during 2001.

### Joint Office Gozo Branch

The services offered at the Gozo Branch are restricted to the collection of rents, ground rents and *qbiela*, and the provision of customer care services.

As from this year, the Gozo Branch is on the DAS accounting system so that bank remittances can be electronically transferred directly to Treasury. This system is more efficient and offers more security. The Gozo office was also provided with office equipment so that better services may be provided to the public. For the first time this year arrangements have been made with the Diocese of Gozo so that staff from Malta may travel to Gozo regularly to meet the Administrative Secretary of the Gozo Diocese in connection with the exchange of information to facilitate the identification of property.

One of the two officers at the Gozo Branch was boarded out during the year. Up to 31 December 2001 no replacement was found.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

Although the staff complement should hover around the 47 mark, actual staff at the end of 2001 was 34. Towards the end of 2001, a decision was taken to integrate the Joint Office within the Government Property Division so that there would be more uniformity with the policies of the other two Departments falling under the Division.

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