

---

# GOVERNMENT PROPERTY DIVISION

## Joint Office

---

---

### INTRODUCTION

The Joint Office forms part of the Government Property Division under the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs. The roles of the Joint Office are:

- a) Managing and administering the immovable estate transferred to Government by the Ecclesiastical Authorities in terms of the Ecclesiastical Entities (Properties) Act, Chap. 358;
- b) Validating and verifying the data being transferred to it by the ecclesiastical entities. The scope is 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.
- c) On completion of the above processes, the Joint Office has to register at the Land Registry all the properties which it administers, as well as those retained by the Ecclesiastical Entities.

### Property Administration and Alienations:

In the year 2004, the following properties were alienated:

As per Schemes of 1996	41
As per Scheme of 2002	183
As per original deed	15
Through Tenders/Exchange/Direct Disposal	14
By Court Order	<u>1</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>254</u></b>

In terms of Article 2 of the agreement between the Government and the Holy See, 15 premises were transferred to the Housing Authority by Legal Notices No 180/2004 and No. 438/2004 to be allocated for social housing.

Plots in Bir id-Deheb, Gudja, Marsascala, Qormi, Zejtun and Zurrieq were transferred to Enemalta Corporation for the construction of substations.

The Department also received and processed requests for the recognition of emphyteutae and tenants in their respective properties.

## **2002 Scheme**

By the end of the year, the Joint Office had received 3502 applications for the redemption of ground rent and for the purchase of leased premises. This resulted from the announcement made by Government in the Budget Speech for the year 2002, that the government was putting on the market all the properties being administered by the Joint Office and which are either resident-occupied or used as a summer residence.

Of the 2018 applications processed so far, 419 applications were invalid and a further 1437 applicants were informed of the amount of redemption or of the selling price, as determined by established criteria. With a view of hastening the process, the Joint Office farms out to architects in private practice, the valuation of certain properties.

The applications from the 1996 scheme for the redemption of groundrent or for the purchase of leased residences have been finalized, with the exception of a small number of applications for the redemption of temporary groundrents, which are still presenting problems of verification or recognition.

## **Agriculture Leases Scheme**

The Joint Office is also processing applications received by February 2001 in terms of a scheme, whereby persons occupying government-owned land for agricultural purposes without title, were given the opportunity to regularize their position.

## **Reconciliation, Verification and Registration**

### *Transfer of Information on Properties*

During the year 2004, the transfer of information from the Church Administrative Offices to the Joint Office regarding properties transferred to the Government by the Church continued at a steady pace. Up to the end of this year, 23,950 forms concerning properties listed in Annex 8 of the Church/State Agreement, were forwarded to the Joint Office by the ecclesiastical entities.

It is to be noted, however, that a large number of correction forms had to be raised or confirmed regarding this information, which corrections, have to be approved by the Control Committee in terms of Section 4 (2) of the Agreement. These corrections entail additions of properties inadvertently left out of the Annexes to the Agreement, deletion of others that were erroneously included, and correction to the capitalized amounts of properties.

In the year 2004, the Control Committee approved 674 of the above mentioned corrections. The Committee also signed 313 property forms, thus confirming the final amount due to the Ecclesiastical Entities in respect of the properties concerned.

During 2004, the Joint Office continued on the embarkation of the strategy to reconcile the values of properties previously owned by the 99 different Ecclesiastical Entities. In fact, during this year the Joint Office has verified and determined the exact value of the properties transferred to the government of another 18 such Entities, bringing the total of reconciled entities at 33.

### *Registration of Properties*

The Department continued with the registration of property with the Land Registry in terms of Chap 358. During the year under review 889 properties were registered. The related work entailed the drawing up of relative plans. This brought the total number of properties registered as on 31 December 2004 to 8944.

The following table shows the number of properties which were registered during the past three years

Year	2002	2003	2004
Registered Properties	944	1517	889

### **Administration**

#### *Revenue Collection*

Besides the collection of rent of leased properties, the Department identified properties available for disposal in terms of the Disposal of Government Land Act.

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

	2002	2003	2004
	Lm	Lm	Lm
Rent	351,140	388,677	502,675
Sales	995,596	2,201,081	1,668,328 *
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,346,736</b>	<b>2,589,758</b>	<b>2,171,003</b>

47% of the amount of rent collected during year 2004 consisted of arrears. This was the result of an enforcement exercise undertaken by the Department in conjunction with the Land Department.

\* The amount of Lm939330 was generated from the 2002 Scheme.

#### *The Control Committee*

The Control Committee is a body set up in terms of Article 17 of the 1991 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 present members representing the Government of Malta were nominated in January 2002.

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.

By Legal Notice No. 347/2004, Lm1,718,800 in Government stock was issued to the Foundation for Church Schools in respect of property alienated in the previous year.

### *Joint Office - Gozo Branch*

For the convenience of Gozo residents, the Department has an office in Gozo where rents, ground rents and *qbiela* may be paid. The Gozo office also provides customer care services.

### *Human Resources*

Although the staff complement in the year 2000 stood at 47, the actual staff at the end of 2004 stood at 32 personnel which includes 3 ex-Malta Post Office employees and 3 ex-Malta Drydocks employees recruited in 2003.

### *Co-Ordination with the Estate Management Department and the Land Department*

With the amalgamation of the Joint Office within the Government Property Division, at the beginning of 2002, the Joint Office worked hand in hand with the Land Department, which is responsible for the legal aspects of government property management, and also with the Estate Management Department, which is entrusted with the role of promoting the effective management of government immovable property. This co-ordination and related co-operation with these two other Departments falling under the Division, has been essential for uniformity in adopting the common policies of the Division.

Joseph Sciriha  
Director, Joint Office

Perit John Sciberras  
Director General