



K A M R A T A L - P E R I T I

To support members of the profession in achieving excellence in their practice of architecture and engineering in the interest of the community

PRESS RELEASE 04/2020

21 March 2020

Quality of life and public safety should underpin future of construction industry

The *Kamra tal-Periti* met with Prime Minister Robert Abela, Minister Aaron Farrugia, Minister Ian Borg and Parliamentary Secretary Chris Agius yesterday afternoon to discuss the two public safety crises that have engulfed our country: the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of adequate regulation in the construction industry, which recently led to the premature demise of Miriam Pace.

Construction industry crisis

On the construction industry crisis, *Kamra tal-Periti* President, Simone Vella Lenicker, acknowledged the role of some members of the profession. She also acknowledged the fact that Government had recognised the need for change, which it committed to implementing in the Letter of Commitment signed in August 2019. This outlined a number of reforms which the *Kamra* has been striving for, including:

- The licensing and classification of contractors by the State to ensure they are qualified to shoulder their responsibilities, and give the public and consumers peace of mind;
- The consolidation of laws and regulations whose remit is scattered in 22 different public entities;
- The introduction of regulations covering the design of permanent works which would fall under the responsibility of *periti* and engineers, and the execution of temporary works which would fall under the responsibility of contractors, thereby providing simplicity and clarity of the roles within the industry;
- The enactment of the long-overdue amendments to the Periti Act.

Vella Lenicker welcomed the Prime Minister's statement in Parliament that responsibilities on site should follow the Civil Code, which underscores the symmetric responsibilities of *periti* and contractors. To this end, she called on Government to revise LN 136 of 2019 to eliminate the ambiguities about site responsibilities that it brought about.

Government must also look at the issues besetting the industry in a holistic and comprehensive manner, as the *Kamra tal-Periti* has been calling for since 2007. Among these issues was the ill-advised obsession of the Planning Authority to insist on the indiscriminate provision of underground carparking, which is leading to the dangerous practice of excavating between party walls in narrow sites, as well as causing wider problems of waste management, traffic, air pollution and a rapid deterioration of the quality of life of Malta's citizens.

Prime Minister Abela welcomed the *Kamra's* contributions and detailed recommendations and looked forward to collaborating further with the *Kamra* in introducing the necessary reforms in the industry.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Vella Lenicker outlined the profession's concerns about the risks to public safety should a national lockdown be announced suddenly. She explained that it is not advisable to abruptly shut down all construction sites, as some may present a greater risk to public safety if they are abandoned without the necessary precautions being put in place to ensure structural stability. She also stated that there may also be instances where properties may require urgent maintenance or repairs during the lockdown period, and provisions should be made for such situations.

It was agreed that, although there is no indication as yet from the public health authorities that a lockdown is imminent, separate discussions would be held with the relevant Ministries to prepare for such an eventuality should it arise.