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Media Release

The Malta Employers' Association presents position paper on Precarious Employment

The Malta Employers' Association has published a position paper on illegal and atypical employment practices as part of the ongoing discussions on precarious employment.

The paper provides an analysis of the local labour market situation against an international backdrop, and, in the absence of an accepted definition of precarious work, groups alleged precarious employment practices under three general headings: illegal employment practices, atypical employment and unethical employment.

With regards to illegal practices, the Association's position is that, rather than introducing further legislation, a better solution lies in strengthening enforcement of existing legislation to ensure decent work for employees and a level playing field for employers through compliance. The Association stressed that it has consistently campaigned for law enforcement and has never defended illegal work practices.

During a presentation for the media, Mr. Joseph Farrugia, MEA Director General, highlighted the fact that even if one were to classify part-time, temping and definite period contract work as 'precarious', official statistics reveal that the prevalence of such employment contracts in Malta is significantly less than that prevailing in the EU, which has amongst the most tightly regulated labour markets in the world. He also said that atypical employment is a necessary feature in a labour market which is adjusting itself to changing labour demographics due to a higher female participation, more foreign employees and also an increasing number of retired employees in employment.

He also made reference of a list of work practices which have been termed as 'precarious' in a survey carried out by the General Workers' Union, and explained how each one of these practices is already covered by existing legislation.

The MEA made a number of recommendations to curb abuses in employment. The Association called on Government to set a minimum hourly rate to ensure that companies winning tenders are in a position to provide at least the legal minimum working conditions to their employees, and to be

in a position to abide with any regulations and administrative burdens which may be imposed upon them. Government should also strengthen its inspectorate to ensure compliance. The MEA also appealed to Government to endorse the Services Charter which it has proposed to cover the Security, Cleaning and Care Working sectors as a self regulating mechanism to facilitate compliance. The measures which have just been announced by Government to control illegal practices in outsourced services is a welcome step in the right direction which the Association has been recommending in lieu of uncalled for and unnecessary legislation. The Association said that unions should also endorse the Charter and respect the principle of freedom of association to the full, including the freedom to choose one's representative or even to leave a union without coercion from unions or management. MEA said that it also has a role to play in educating its members about their legal rights and obligations and to promote ethical work practices.