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## Media Release

### **MEA: Eurobarometer survey highlights the pressing need to separate business from politics**

The Malta Employers' Association stated that the findings of the Eurobarometer on business and corruption are shocking, but not surprising. For years, the Association has been saying that the situation has been deteriorating, but there is an unwillingness to tackle the issues concretely. We are now living in an environment where 87% of Maltese believe that corruption is part of the country's business culture, and 79% see bribery and abuse of power as being rampant. It does not take Eurobarometer to conclude that many businesses believe that they can only succeed if they have the right political connections, with a majority stating that we have an issue with nepotism and patronage.

The findings of the Eurobarometer reveal that there is no level playing field between businesses that is critical in ensuring a healthy competitive environment that generates investment and jobs. Rather, we are sliding a dangerous path that leads to equating entrepreneurship with opportunism, and that the concept of business success is more dependent on political contacts than it is on creative vision and risk taking.

This does not bode well for both domestic and foreign direct investment, as more honest businesses will have to choose between either riding with the flow or to seek business opportunities elsewhere.

Once again, MEA stresses the need to implement reforms that include:

- A leaner parliament with full-time, better paid members.
- Political parties will be exclusively state funded. All private donations and door to door collections will be illegal.
- Full disclosure of contracts, remuneration, packages of persons of trust
- Periodic independent audits of persons of trust to assess time spent, activities and results achieved
- Number of persons on a position of trust will be capped
- All contracts signed by government with third parties will be made public within 3 months from the date of signing
- There will be no binding agreements with entities whose ultimate beneficiaries are unknown

- Parameters for public procurement through direct orders should be respected and enforced

Although these proposals are fundamental, there is nothing controversial about them. They should appeal to anyone who believes that sustainable businesses and the well-being of society is dependent on a sound moral and ethical infrastructure to ensure that success and achievement are based on merit and hard work, rather than on political connections. The MEA said that although these issues have been raised at MCESD in the past, they need constant re-enforcement by the social partners to bring our politicians to their senses.