



THE MALTA CHAMBER



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Media Release

Business lobbies call on PL to withdraw Mandatory Union membership proposal from its Electoral Programme

The Malta Employers' Association, the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, and the Malta Chamber of SMEs have urged the Partit Laburista to withdraw its proposal to introduce mandatory union membership for employees as included in its electoral manifesto. The employer bodies said that this measure, as proposed, is regressive and undemocratic, and will not in any way strengthen the state of industrial relations and social dialogue in Malta.

The constituted bodies stressed that they are emphatically not opposed to trade union membership, and proof of this is that Malta has one of the highest trade union density on the world. In fact the average trade union density in OECD countries stands at 17%, whereas in Malta, official figures compiled by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, based on the unions' self-reporting, confirm that this is in the region of 50%. Employees are free to choose whether to become members of the union of their choice, and the bodies are unified in their view that no one, including companies, should be denied the right to association with a union or organisation of their choice or to opt to withdraw or dissociate themselves from such membership. This is a fundamental principle of any democracy which can never be tampered with. The bodies recommended that, rather than mandatory membership, trade unions should be assisted in becoming better equipped to attract more members through capacity building initiatives.

During the press conference, Mr. Joseph Farrugia, Director General of the MEA, delivered a presentation where he explained that the PL proposal goes against spirit of ILO Convention 87, the United Nations Charter for Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights and also the Maltese Constitution which clearly establishes in Article 42 that no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

The employer bodies stated that they appreciate and agree with Minister Clyde Caruana's assertions during a debate held at the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Industry this Monday, that there are workers who do not want to be unionised, and that they should not be forced to become union members, but added that his statements are not supported by the PLs document. They added that the proposal for mandatory union membership is not up for discussion with them, and the PL should immediately withdraw this proposal from its manifesto which is the roadmap for the direction this country will take in the coming legislature of elected.



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The reaction to mandatory union membership was already explicitly made in a meeting between the constituted bodies and the Prime Minister back in 2019, which is why they are surprised and disappointed that now it is entrenched in the PL electoral programme.

The bodies expressed their reluctance to be drawn into the political fray at this stage of the electoral campaign, but some things cannot be allowed to pass unnoticed. They said that in their documents, both major political parties have made some valid proposals which should be the basis of national consensus on some issues, combined with others that are frivolous and unrealistic.