

21st July 2022

Media Release

MEA calls for collaborative action on a national level towards the strengthening of skills and competitiveness

The significant pressure being faced by employers to identify the right human resources with the appropriate skills for their operations is a threat to the continuity, competitiveness and future of Maltese businesses. The country needs a clear strategy with practical solutions where key stakeholders work together towards a common objective. Malta Employers Association President Joanne Bondin and Director General Joseph Farrugia highlighted these challenges during a Stakeholders Seminar organised by the MEA at the House of Representatives in the Parliament building in Valletta.

This event brought together national entities and relevant stakeholders which play a direct or indirect role in the employment of workers within Malta's labour market.

Ms Bondin explained that the MEA's objective is elevate this issue at the top of the agenda of social dialogue in Malta. "I appeal to our political leaders, the constituted bodies – including both employer organisations and trade unions, national entities and regulators to join us in a clear commitment to ensure that the country can develop and attract the right skills to strengthen its competitiveness in the future", Mr Bondin added. This was also the reason for hosting the Stakeholders Seminar in Parliament, the highest institution of the State.

Mr Farrugia argued that the nation's priority should be to optimise its human resource availability rather than simply talk about attracting more workers to the country. "We need to strengthen our capital investment so that new economic activity does not necessarily require more resources but perhaps different and adapted skills. This is why we need to coordinate our efforts towards this objective." The Director-General argued that this is also a matter of values, ethics and life skills, which are becoming more relevant in a post-pandemic scenario where employees are prioritising flexibility above stability. "It is imperative that all stakeholders work together to identify the key challenges, develop solutions and work in sync towards the achievement of such objectives", Mr Farrugia concluded.

Mr Kevin J Borg, an MEA Consultant, highlighted the key recommendations brought forward by MEA members so far, including proposals for reforms related to the pension system as

35/1, South Street,
Valletta VLT 1100, Malta
t: (+356) 21 237585, 21 222992
f: (+356) 21 230227
e: admin@maltaemployers.com
www.maltaemployers.com

well as the educational system, soft skills, career guidance and similar matters. However, with such reforms possibly bearing fruit in the years ahead, the acute lack of resources is pushing employers to consider third country nationals, and in this context, a fine-tuning and improvement in the procedures related to obtaining the required permits is called for.

Mr Anton Vella, MEA Executive, appealed for tangible action following these discussions, expressing a hope that words are transformed into action to the benefit of the labour market and the country's economy. "We should be proud to be able to come together, plan the necessary action in the labour market and enjoy the fruit of such progress collectively".

The event was opened by the Speaker of the House, Dr Anglu Farrugia, who acknowledged that the theme of the seminar, focusing on ensuring the right skills for our country's competitiveness, is crucial for Malta's sustainable development. He called for further synergies between all stakeholders towards the development of human resources, including through further integration of the foreign workforce in Malta, which is an essential component of the labour market.