

# Update

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## Managing a Multicultural Workforce

In this era of technology, globalisation and labour shortage, many companies are making an effort to succeed in cultural diversity at the workplace.

According to a recent survey conducted by the MEA, out of 438 respondents, 77% of companies employ a non-Maltese employee. 28% employ between 0-10%, 18% employ between 10-25%, 16% employ between 25-50% and 14% employ more than 50% of their workforce.

The number of foreign workers is deemed to continue growing. In January 2019, Head of Jobsplus Clyde Caruana stated that Malta will need another 13,000 foreigners this year if Malta is to maintain its economic growth.

Multiculturalism is bringing together a diverse set of cultures and ethnic backgrounds at the workplace, and employers are being forced to adopt

a diverse business culture in order to operate more effectively.

In March 2019, MEA in collaboration with Global Mindset Development (GMD) has organized two workshops on the '*Challenges, strategies, tools and synergies to cope with diversity at the workplace*', delivered by Dr Viviana Premazzi.



MEA members stated that many companies in Malta are facing challenges related to:

- Communication (i.e. different understanding of professional etiquette, language barriers like the

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inability to communicate in Maltese or English)

- Religion (i.e. special leave arrangements and requirements for adequate praying spaces)
- Integration (i.e. unable to understand the legality of contracts, work-in benefits and health schemes)
- Cultural differences (i.e. conflicting working styles across teams, stereotypes)



Cultural barriers can get in the way of a truly integrated, multicultural workforce. However, management can overcome such challenges by:

- Maintaining clear diversity policies and explaining what is, and what is not, acceptable behavior
- Having representatives for different nationalities to facilitate communication

- Providing orientation packs to foreign employees and organizing integration courses
- Organizing social events to improve understanding and awareness of cultural differences

These are just some of the solutions discussed during the workshops; a lot more can be done to ensure that business does not suffer when dealing with a multicultural workforce.

Having a diverse workforce can assist the company in increased productivity and profits, improve employee engagement and reduce turnover, improves cultural insights and wider range of skills, as well we improve company reputation.

