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BUDGET 2025



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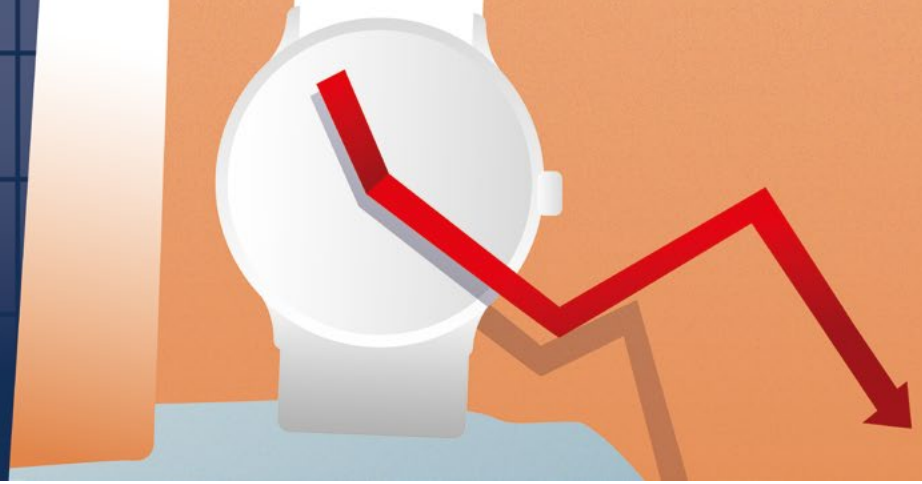
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BUDGET 2025



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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR EVERYONE LIVING AND WORKING IN MALTA

Chris Vassallo Cesareo

President, The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry

Our country's focus on headline economic indicators such as GDP growth, per capita income, and unemployment rates, often overlooks the broader societal costs that come with pursuing growth at any cost.

As we move forward, we must shift from superficial assessments of economic success to a deeper, more holistic analysis of the wellbeing of our population - both now and in the future. Economic policies must prioritise sustainable development and ensure a good quality of life for all citizens.

Malta's infrastructure is under tremendous strain. Skyrocketing housing prices, overburdened public services, and the daily stresses on our roads and utilities are signs that the current economic model, which depends heavily on increasing the number of foreign workers and tourists, is unsustainable.

"To accomplish all of this, we must strive for political consensus on an economic transformation strategy that values quality over quantity, productivity over volume, and compliance with transparent communication between the government and social partners."

No matter how much we invest in infrastructure, if the demand continues to grow unchecked, we will eventually reach a point of no return. The simple truth is this: we need to rein in the numbers and focus on value and quality. Otherwise, we risk seeing a total collapse of our infrastructure and essential services.

At The Malta Chamber, we believe that the solution is clear. Malta is at a crossroads. Continuing with the status quo is not a viable option.

What we need is a well-structured economic transformation strategy that enables sustainable economic growth while preserving a high quality of life.

Such a strategy would allow Malta to achieve several key milestones:

- It would reduce our reliance on Malta's attractiveness being tied to corporate taxation and shift it towards unique competencies and greater efficiency.

- It would ensure that present and future generations are equipped with the skills needed to support this strategy, meaning our education system must be aligned and adequately resourced to meet these demands.
- It would help us strike the right balance between economic growth and sustainability, two objectives that have long been seen as conflicting, but should instead reinforce each other.
- It would direct investment towards value-added sectors, increasing productivity rather than pouring capital into developments that further strain our infrastructure, like hotels or supermarkets.

Sustainability, a theme that The Malta Chamber has spoken about year after year, also plays a vital role. In our response to Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050, we emphasised that economic growth must go hand in hand with increased quality of life, wellbeing, and sustainability.

Among our proposals were ideas like a smart energy grid, better use of organic waste, an e-mobility wallet, and new success measures like a well-being index.

Achieving these goals requires a comprehensive economic transformation, one in which Malta must lead or risk falling behind.

We cannot discuss sustainability without addressing urban planning. Proper planning ensures a sustainable level of economic development while safeguarding our cultural and natural heritage. It also promotes efficient infrastructure and a high quality of life.

Planning must be forward-thinking, taking into consideration the long-term impact on our environment and communities.

To accomplish all of this, we must strive for political consensus on an economic transformation strategy that values quality over quantity, productivity over volume, and compliance with transparent communication between the government and social partners.



This means raising social dialogue to a higher level - giving stakeholders, including political players and social partners, a meaningful role in shaping Malta's economic future. This cannot be limited by electoral timelines but must transcend short-term political gains for the sake of long-term national progress.

As Mario Draghi once said, we need maturity and foresight in our decision-making. We must look beyond short-term, domestic concerns and embrace a global, forward-thinking perspective.

As a nation we have always proved to be resilient and risen to the occasion when change was required. Now it is the opportune time to collectively move into action once again and transform the challenges we are facing into opportunities.

The decisions we make today will shape Malta's future for generations to come.



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PRIORITISING QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Dr Marthese Portelli

CEO, The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry

Our country's focus on headline economic indicators such as GDP growth, per capita income, and unemployment rates, often overlooks the broader societal costs that come with pursuing growth at any cost.

The Malta Chamber has repeatedly emphasised that the national budget needs to be developed within the context of a comprehensive strategic plan with a broader long-term perspective and outlook, and that it should “look at prosperity beyond GDP” – the emphasis on headline economic indicators like GDP growth, per capita income and unemployment rates often overlooks the broader societal costs associated with pursuing growth at any cost.

Proper fiscal planning is required in order to ensure that the necessary changes, reforms and initiatives aimed at enhancing quality are realised.

It is vital to move from a superficial assessment of economic performance to a more thorough analysis of the overall wellbeing of the population, ensuring that economic policies prioritise sustainable development and quality of life for all citizens

In its Pre-Budget document, The Malta Chamber put forward 219 proposals categorised under 12 main priority areas, addressing the following:

1. Competitiveness
2. Fiscal Discipline
3. Utilities
4. Renewables
5. Traffic Congestion
6. Sustainable Tourism
7. Planning and Upkeep of Public Areas
8. Value-Added Employment
9. Third Country Nationals (TCNs)
10. Low Income Earners and Pensioners
11. Public Procurement
12. Proper Enforcement of Laws and Regulations

This Budget put forward by Government focused on wealth distribution and incentivising consumption primarily through energy subsidies, social assistance for pensioners and vulnerable persons, as well as revised tax brackets.

However, there is also a need to address productivity, competitiveness, and attractiveness to ensure sustainable wealth generation.

The country's attractiveness is affected by infrastructure strain, over-construction, skyrocketing housing prices, environmental degradation, and overburdened public services.

A shift towards a high-value-added economy, away from a labour-intensive one, is necessary. This includes investing in worker training, upskilling, and technology to boost efficiency and productivity.

Policymakers need to incentivise and push for a shift towards value-added and quality. Prioritising productivity, competitiveness, attractiveness, and overall well-being is essential to prevent a decline in quality of life, which would make the country less attractive to high-quality investors, visitors, and residents.

While the Budget remains a fundamental annual financial planning exercise aimed at reviewing taxes, subsidies, and social benefits; allocating funds for ministries and government projects; and forecasting government borrowing needs, it needs to be developed within the context of a comprehensive strategic plan with a long-term outlook.

Ultimately it is Government's responsibility to administer taxpayer money diligently and correctly.

“A shift towards a high-value-added economy, away from a labour-intensive one, is necessary. This includes investing in worker training, upskilling, and technology to boost efficiency and productivity.”

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“The shift to quality is not just overdue; it is essential. However, stating this goal is far easier than realising it. The Malta Chamber continues to urge the government to act decisively and adopt a strategic approach to achieve sustainable, value-driven growth.”

A CALL TO ACTION FOR MALTA

Rachel Bondi Attard,

Head – Media and Communications Strategist, The Malta Chamber

Malta stands at a crossroads, facing the need to shift its economic approach after a decade of policies that largely focused on growth by numbers.

The government recently acknowledged this in its 2025 budget presentation, asserting that the economy is strong enough to pivot from quantity to quality. However, the Malta Chamber believes that while the destination is clear, the roadmap remains absent.

Finance Minister Clyde Caruana’s budget speech for 2025 underscored the government’s recognition of the need for a qualitative shift in economic strategy. Yet, this vision demands more than rhetoric; it requires a structured plan to achieve tangible results.

In our response to the budget, The Malta Chamber commended the intention but highlighted a critical gap: Budget 2025 speaks of quality but fails to provide a concrete path to achieve it.

This change in narrative comes after years of warnings from The Malta Chamber about the unsustainable nature of Malta’s past policies. For too long, the focus on increasing quantity - whether in population, workforce, or output - has pushed the country to the brink of economic and social strain.

The challenges are evident: over-reliance on labour-intensive industries, low productivity, and a migration influx that has only marginally enriched Malta’s skills base.

The shift to quality is not just overdue; it is essential. However, stating this goal is far easier than realising it. The Malta Chamber continues to urge the government to act decisively and adopt a strategic approach to achieve sustainable, value-driven growth.

Key to this transition is a model that prioritizes **productivity, well-being, and long-term viability** over short-term numerical gains.

What Needs to Change

The government must embrace several fundamental changes to ensure Malta thrives under this new vision.

1. Educational Reform: The education system must be overhauled to align with future demands. By fostering a workforce equipped with the skills needed in a rapidly evolving global economy, Malta can attract higher-value industries and investments.

2. Targeted Labour Migration Policy: Labour migration should be carefully planned and discussed with key stakeholders. This ensures that new entrants into the workforce enhance Malta’s skill base without causing unnecessary strain on resources or social systems.

3. Upskilling and Productivity: Employers and policymakers must prioritize the upskilling of the existing workforce. Equally, reducing over-staffing in government agencies is imperative to improve efficiency and redirect resources toward productivity gains in critical sectors.

4. Value-Driven Investments: Foreign direct investment should focus on sectors that generate higher value-added output, rather than relying on labour-intensive industries with low productivity.

The Clock is Ticking

The longer it takes for the government to implement these changes, the more challenging it will be to reverse unsustainable trends. Time is of the essence, and complacency will only deepen Malta’s reliance on an economic model ill-suited to modern realities.

Transitioning to a quality-based economic strategy will undoubtedly be a struggle. It demands a concerted effort from policymakers, businesses, and society as a whole. However, this call to action cannot be ignored. Malta’s future prosperity depends on a willingness to adapt, innovate, and focus on sustainable growth that benefits all citizens.

The Malta Chamber remains steadfast in advocating for this shift. We believe Malta has the potential to not only meet but exceed these challenges, provided the government listens and takes decisive, strategic action.

The vision is clear; now is the time to execute it.

A BUDGET TO TAKE MALTA TO THE NEXT LEVEL

In the last decade, our country has progressed greatly in terms of economic and social development. Malta has managed to converge to, and now exceed, the euro area's GDP per capita. Our employment rate, previously one of the lowest, is now well above the European average. We withstood economic shocks such as the pandemic and the global surge in energy prices without resorting to austerity measures.

Yet this success has bred its own challenges. An ageing population, combined with a very high labour participation rate, implies that continued job-rich economic growth would require ever higher immigration, thus putting stress on our country's infrastructure.

At the same time, higher incomes have changed the nature and quality of the services desired by our population, increasing for instance the demand for more green and open spaces.

For our country to reach the next stage of economic development our workforce must upskill as we also need to supplement our investment in formal education with an enhanced focus on lifelong learning and non-academic training.

This year's Budget sets out Government's plans on how to continue building on the successes of the past, while addressing these new challenges.

In this light, the budget includes several measures that bolster further the income of families, such as the largest reduction in personal income tax, a further record improvement in children's allowance, and yet more increases in pensions.

The Budget also provides targeted support for specific groups such as low-income families with measures including grants for home libraries, significant improvements in benefits to disabled persons and their carers, and a further increase in benefits to address the rise in the cost-of-living.

We announced innovative initiatives to increase access to mental health services within the community, free gym memberships for youths, and the removal of the pink tax.

A pensioner couple on the lowest pension will be nearly €1,500 better off following this year's budget measures, marking a 25% increase when compared to the previous two budgets of this legislature.

A working couple on the minimum wage, with two children, will be nearly €2,600 better off, or 15% better than the average income increase seen in the last two budgets.

A middle-class family, with children in private education, will benefit by nearly €3,000, or 38% more than in previous budgets. This shows how wide-ranging the Budget measures are.

Equally, if not more importantly, the budget also sets out the components of this administration's new direction towards an enhanced quality of life for all.

It underlines the importance of the Malta Vision 2050 process, which will result in a policy focusing on growth in more value-added sectors, based on four pillars namely innovation and technology, sustainability and the green economy, infrastructure and skills development.

Budget 2025 outlines the next steps in terms of the development of a labour migration policy that suits the needs of our nation and balances this with the requirements of our economy.

We also set out amongst other actions, the intended changes in our employment policies to enhance support for upskilling, short term measures to address traffic congestion, and the pivoting of tourism promotion towards higher quality visitors.

In the coming years, economic and social progress will depend on our country tackling successfully the green and digital transitions.

To do this we must implement very significant changes in the way we operate and how we live our daily lives. Budget 2025 marks the start of the road towards making these changes.

I believe that by working together, we can achieve this transformation and take Malta to the next level.

Dr Robert Abela,
Prime Minister of Malta



“For our country to reach the next stage of economic development our workforce must upskill as we also need to supplement our investment in formal education with an enhanced focus on lifelong learning and non-academic training.”

“Our vision for Malta includes cleaner air, reduced congestion, and community spaces that encourage engagement and leisure. With the right investments, we will build a Malta that serves its residents and businesses alike.”



Dr Bernard Grech,
Opposition and PN Leader

CALL TO ACTION:

ELEVATE GOVERNANCE IN MALTA'S BUSINESS

With the release of this year's Budget, Malta has missed a significant opportunity to shape a resilient, competitive, and forward-looking economy. While short-term economic gains may be addressed, true prosperity demands a long-term vision focused on integrity, innovation, and robust infrastructure that drives both economic growth and quality of life for all Maltese citizens.

The Nationalist Party (PN) envisions a Malta that rises above today's limitations to become a leader in sustainable development, economic inclusivity, and community wellbeing.

A PN-led government will prioritise these pillars, transforming Malta into a beacon of opportunity in the Mediterranean. Yet, looking at this Budget, it's evident the government has missed a vital opportunity to meaningfully invest in infrastructure, quality of life, and the future economy.

Restoring trust and transparency in our institutions

A thriving economy rests on a foundation of trust - trust in governance, regulatory systems, and the rule of law. Sadly, recent years have revealed inefficiencies and opacity in our institutions, eroding public trust and discouraging investment.

Findings from the EY Malta Attractiveness Survey highlight deep concerns over political and regulatory instability, which currently cast doubt on Malta's reliability as an investment destination.

This Budget, unfortunately, fails to address these institutional challenges or the need for serious reform. The PN is committed to a governance model based on integrity and fairness, fostering an environment where businesses can thrive, unburdened by bureaucratic obstacles or corruption.

By prioritising transparency and accountability, we can rebuild a Malta where citizens and investors trust that opportunities are real, equitable, and attainable.

Preparing for a future economy

Today's global economy demands adaptability, resilience, and innovation. Unfortunately, this Budget does not reflect the bold investments needed to make Malta a leader in emerging sectors. Innovation is no longer a luxury; it is essential for Malta's economic future.

A PN-led government envisions Malta as a hub where local talent and international partnerships flourish. We will invest in high-value sectors, from artificial intelligence to E-sports, creating jobs that keep our talented citizens engaged and here in Malta.

This is a promise to every Maltese worker: we will create a future economy that offers better, higher-paying opportunities and places Malta firmly on the global stage.

Infrastructure and quality of life: the backbone of a thriving Malta

Malta's infrastructure, from congested roads to poorly planned urban spaces, has struggled under the weight of rapid growth. The quality of life for residents is being compromised.

This year's Budget was an opportunity to address these urgent needs by committing to sustainable, resilient infrastructure - investment that not only spurs economic growth but enhances day-to-day life for every citizen. Instead, the government's approach falls short.

The PN believes that well-planned infrastructure, including modernized road networks, efficient public transport, reliable power, upgraded drainage systems, and green spaces, is essential for growth and wellbeing.

Our vision for Malta includes cleaner air, reduced congestion, and community spaces that encourage engagement and leisure. With the right investments, we will build a Malta that serves its residents and businesses alike.

Prioritising quality of life for a sustainable future

Reviewing the 2025 Budget's measures, it's clear that while immediate economic concerns are acknowledged, there is a lack of long-term planning for Malta's sustainable future. The PN is dedicated to a vision built on integrity, innovation, and a commitment to quality of life.

Malta deserves policies that balance economic progress with the well-being of its people. Through responsible planning, we envision cleaner cities, shorter commutes, and healthier communities.

Quality of life will be a guiding principle for the PN, ensuring that Malta thrives as both a competitive economy and a vibrant, livable home for all.

Action points for a PN Government

To deliver on this vision, a Nationalist Party government will prioritise these five actionable steps:

1. Strengthen Institutional Integrity and Transparency

- Introduce independent oversight bodies to ensure transparency across public procurement and government contracts.
- Establish a code of conduct for all government officials, enforcing zero tolerance for corruption and conflicts of interest.

2. Advance Innovation through Strategic Investment

- Invest in high-value industries, particularly AI, renewable energy, and digital innovation, to create sustainable job opportunities.
- Develop a national innovation hub that connects Maltese talent with global experts, fostering innovation-driven startups.

3. Revamp Public Infrastructure for a Resilient Future

- Modernise Malta's transport network, investing in sustainable mobility solutions like public transit and cycling infrastructure.
- Upgrade essential services such as power grids, water management, and drainage systems to accommodate future growth.

4. Enhance Green and Community Spaces

- Implement an urban greening initiative to create accessible parks, walking paths, and public spaces that improve air quality and reduce urban heat.
- Prioritise community-focused development that fosters neighborhood connections and supports family well-being.

5. Foster a Quality-of-Life Index to Guide Policy

- Establish a Quality-of-Life Index to measure factors like commute times, public service accessibility, and environmental quality, ensuring policies align with citizen well-being.
- Use this index to track progress and adapt government strategies, ensuring a consistent focus on the long-term wellbeing of Maltese communities.

Conclusion: A vision for Malta's prosperous future

This is our promise: to build a Malta where businesses flourish, innovation drives progress, and quality of life is our highest priority.

The Nationalist Party is committed to creating a resilient Malta - a place where economic vitality and community well-being are intertwined, ensuring that Malta remains a competitive, fulfilling home for all its citizens.



THE MALTA CHAMBER'S

PRE-BUDGET

PROPOSALS 2025

12

MAIN PRIORITY
AREAS FOR
2025

1. Competitiveness
2. Fiscal Discipline
3. Utilities
4. Renewables
5. Traffic Congestion
6. Sustainable Tourism
7. Planning and Upkeep of Public Areas
8. Value-Added Employment
9. Third Country Nationals (TCNs)
10. Low Income Earners and Pensioners
11. Public Procurement
12. Proper Enforcement of Laws & Regulations



PRIORITY 1 COMPETITIVENESS

- 1. Address Shortcomings and Resultant Gaps to Ensure a Fair and Competitive Environment**
 - Legitimate and ethical businesses are increasingly being penalised for being good corporate citizens
- 2. Address Connectivity and the Cost of Transportation**
 - Connection to the major ports in the Mediterranean supported by a PSO
 - Modification of port operations to increase efficiency and lower operational costs
 - Industrial Policy for Malta which identifies niche advanced value-added manufacturing clusters
- 3. Speed Up Infrastructural Investments for Increased Productivity**
 - Readiness for climate change adaptation
 - Lesser mobility disruptions

Enhancing Malta's **productivity** and **competitiveness** should be the **top priority for economic policy**. Without productivity gains and a thorough rationalisation of resource use in both the public and private sectors, we run the risk of permanently losing our competitiveness, which will have negative effects on tourism and on our exports especially in the manufacturing sector.

PRIORITY 2 FISCAL DISCIPLINE

- 1. Address Fragmentation by introducing Ease of Doing Business Measures**
 - Automation of customer care and verification
 - Introduction of real-time status tracking technology
 - One integrated portal for reporting and payments of VAT, Tax, Financial Incentives & Schemes
 - Acceleration of the process of rebates and disbursements
- 2. Comprehensive Review of Job Roles and Responsibilities in the Public Sector**
 - Streamline processes and eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic layers
 - Second surplus personnel to the private sector + disincentive moving from private to public
 - Revisit half-day schedules for public sector departments
- 3. Roadmap to Prioritise Capital Investment Over Recurrent Expenditure**

Improvement in collection of tax dues + more value-added public spending + ensuring a level playing field in the interest of all is **government's and the public sector's responsibility**. It should **not be limited to just the well-intended consumers and ethical businesses**.



PRIORITY 3 UTILITIES

- 1. A 5-10-year Energy Investment Plan Revisited & Updated on a Yearly Basis**
 - Investment in distribution which serves us for 3 decades
 - A wider renewable energy generation and distribution
 - Liberalisation of the energy distribution market
- 2. Reduction in Subsidies with a Minimum 6-month Advance Notice to Avoid Subsidising Excessive Consumption and Increase Take-Up in Renewables**
 - Display real and subsidised price for energy + carbon emissions + data comparisons
 - Real-time energy consumption data through a free Smart Grid metering app
- 3. Rainwater Harvesting in Businesses and Households**
 - Mandatory cisterns in new buildings
 - Subsidised rates for renovations targeting industrial estates, hotels & agriculture

The urgent need to map out and implement the necessary investment to ensure an adequate electricity supply and a **stable distribution network, adequate water supply and sewage systems that meet the demand is critical.**

PRIORITY 4 RENEWABLES

- 1. A Well-Designed Feed-In Tariff (FIT) for Businesses and Renewable Investment Opportunities which give Better ROI**
 - Zero % VAT on PV systems + their installations + INDIS roofs
 - bi-directional e-vehicles and charging stations - draw power + supply excess energy back
- 2. Incentives Tied to Pre-Set Energy Performance Criteria for New Builds**
 - Fast track permitting + Reduction in Planning Fees (raise for opposite)
 - No or Lesser stamp duty for first-time-buyers
 - Low tax rates for lessors
 - Reduction in capital gains / final withholding tax for developers
- 3. Mandatory Garbage Collection Solutions for all New Developments + Garbage Rooms**
 - not directly linked to renewable energy but linked to the green transition as it aids recycling & proper waste separation

Businesses are faced with ever increasing **responsibilities** and **pressures to go green** and to embark on to the **green transition.**

PRIORITY 5 TRAFFIC CONGESTION

- 1. Introduction of Subsidised E-Wallet for Environmentally Sustainable or Shared Transportation (by land and sea) Couple with Parking Fees in Central Urban Areas and Licence Fees According to Usage**
 - Shift certain heavy vehicles off peak hours (with incentives)
 - Push for off street parking + Provision of off street parking by new developments
- 2. Support to Businesses for Shared Transport or Other Green Options**
 - A mix of tax deductions and vouchers that increase incrementally according to the number of passengers in each pool
 - Lower passenger thresholds stipulated in the Employee Transportation Deduction Act
- 3. Improve Public Transport access to and from Industrial Estates**

We need to **address the root cause of the problem** rather than expanding road networks to accommodate more private car commuters.

PRIORITY 6 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

- 1. Moratorium on Applications for Tourism Accommodation and Instead Work on Attracting Well Established Quality International Symposiums/Exhibitions to Malta During Off Peak Months on an Annual Basis**
- 2. A Clear Plan for Tables and Chairs**
 - Clear criteria which depend on location, kitchen size and indoor seating amongst other criteria, while ensuring unobstructed passage to emergency services, locals, passers by and disabled persons
- 3. Invest % of the VAT Generated by Every Locality Back in the Respective Locality for the Locality's Product Development**
 - More on investment in product development vs the disproportionate emphasis on marketing endeavours

Our country is unique in terms of our **history, culture and character**, offering quality experiences to visitors. To **remain competitive against other competing Mediterranean countries, quality and uniqueness** should be sustained throughout all elements of the supply chain.



PRIORITY 7 **PLANNING & UPKEEP OF PUBLIC AREAS**

- 1. Review of SPED 2015**
 - Ensure that (i) all policies are aligned with the revised SPED, (ii) all policies are clear and unambiguous, leaving no room for a 'pick and choose' approach, and (iii) it is unequivocally determined which planning policies take precedence over others to prevent abuse, misinterpretation and misapplication of policies
- 2. A National Plan for the Systematic and Regular Proper Maintenance and Cleansing of all Public Areas**
 - Boost local commerce + encourage more social interaction + ensure accessibility for all ages and abilities + lower crime rates as they are more likely to be actively used and monitored.
- 3. A Centrally Managed Permitting System to Effectively Plan and Control Multiple Permits for Concurrent Activities, Irrespective of the Entity that Issues Them**

The ad hoc planning approach adopted over the years has uglified Malta and put untenable strains on infrastructure. The upkeep of public areas is equally important for **people's wellbeing and country's attractiveness.**



PRIORITY 8 HIGH VALUE-ADDED EMPLOYMENT

1. **Tax Exemptions for the First 5 Years to Entice Highly Qualified Maltese People Who Are Working and Residing Overseas to Return to Malta**
2. **Revision of the Corporate Taxation Structure**
 - Tax compliant companies to benefit from discounted rates
 - Lower tax rates or targeted tax incentives for high-potential companies (both foreign and local companies)
3. **Creation of an Environment where Academic Institutions, Industry and Broader Society Can Share Their Knowledge and Enhance RD&I**
 - Bring public expenditure on RD&I closer to 2% of GDP from the current low 0.6%
 - Short placements for secondary school students in manuf. & tech-based companies
 - Instil technology from an early age
 - Funding criteria aligned with more with productivity outcomes

Incentives to **shift away from labour-intensive activities to more value-added streams to increase the quality of our offering** & put **less stress on our infrastructure** caused by unsustainable population levels are needed.

PRIORITY 9 THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS

1. **Cap the Percentage of TCNs out of the Total Number of Employees that a Business can Employ at Any Point, with Exceptions in Selected Industries**
 - Temping & outsourcing agencies (now regulated) should have their licences constantly monitored
 - Permanent positions cannot be filled indefinitely by workers provided by temping / outsourcing agencies
2. **Extension of Employment Licenses for an Additional 3 years After the First Year of Successful Employment with the Same Permanent Employer**
3. **A Clear and Well Explained English Language Teaching Visa Policy**
 - Streamlined for student visas (Type C) < 90 days
 - Tied to Jobsplus with residency permit (Type D) > 90 days

An economic model based on a **high value-added economy** as against **maintaining the current economic model based on growing the population at lower productivity levels** is required.



PRIORITY 10 LOW INCOME EARNERS & PENSIONERS

1. **Non Taxation of COLA**
2. **Incorporation of Any Planned Tax Refunds by Cheque into the Revised Tax Bands**
3. **Encourage Uptake of Supplementary Pensions, Particularly by Younger Employees, through the Implementation of an Auto-Enrolment with Opt-Out Mechanism for Employees**
 - Attractive tax incentives (better than the current ones) for better uptake

Targeted assistance should be addressed to **those that need it**, rather than distributing handouts to those that do not, while **lessening the dependence culture on Government**.

PRIORITY 11 PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

1. **A Publicly Accessible Procurement Outlook for All Government Entities**
2. **A Publicly Accessible and Easy To Use Public Contracts Register**
 - Including direct orders
 - Milestones and deliverables with status and respective payment
 - Disputes & variations that may have been registered with respective justification
3. **A Whitelisting System + A Blacklisting System**

Public procurement must be **rationalised to avoid unnecessary spending on superfluous projects**. Contracting Authority must have the **right expertise & technical competencies** to oversee the entire procurement process at **drafting stage, during award and post award**.

Government should refrain from competing directly with the private sector in the provision of services that the private sector can provide more efficiently.

PRIORITY 12 **PROPER ENFORCEMENT**

1. **Combine Agencies and Delineate Authorities (vs demergers)**
 - Address the overlapping and excessive bureaucracy between public entities to ensure better co-ordinated enforcement through the better use of resources - human resource, finance and information
2. **A Better and More Efficient Justice System**
 - Accelerate the process to fully digitalise the law courts
 - Introduce specialised and well-resourced commercial courts
3. **Stop the Adoption of Practices that Propagate a Culture of Clientelism, Increase Inefficiency and Lack Transparency**
 - Adopt a zero-tolerance policy for any kind of abuse that is facilitated by those entrusted with political or administrative responsibility

Proactive, co-ordinated and unselective enforcement is required at all levels, as is **proper governance**.



investing IN Malta's CULTURE & THE ARTS

Malta possesses a priceless national heritage with a distinctive Mediterranean culture. This year's budget is focused on enhancing the value of our arts, culture, and heritage assets, with significant investments in projects that will elevate Malta's standing as a center of quality in these areas.

Key Cultural and Artistic Projects for Malta

- 1. Cultural Hub in Marsa:** The first phase of the Cultural Hub project will begin, backed by €15 million in EU funding. This facility will support Carnival enthusiasts and other artistic communities, providing much-needed space and resources.
- 2. Malta at the South Korea Biennale:** For the first time, the Malta Arts Council will participate in the prestigious Guangju Biennale, providing an international platform for Maltese artists.
- 3. Eurovision Camp and Village:** A new venue will be created for locals and visitors to experience Eurovision up close, featuring resources and activities tailored for fans of this popular event.
- 4. Sculpture Garden:** With a €600,000 investment, this project will establish a sculpture garden at MICAS, including public spaces for visitors to enjoy.
- 5. NAPA Studios in Paola:** The partnership between the National Performing Arts Agency and MCAST will be expanded to develop more facilities for artists in Paola.

Additional Cultural Initiatives

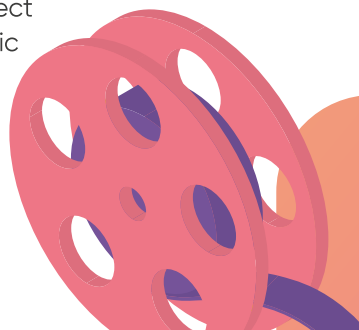
- **PBS Development Projects:** Through a €3 million investment in the Malex House site, Public Broadcasting Services Ltd will build new studio spaces, offices, and state-of-the-art equipment to strengthen the national broadcaster.
- **Maltese Film Support:** Funding for the Screen Support Scheme will increase to €2 million next year to support local filmmakers, promoting growth in Malta's film industry.

Heritage Conservation: 40 New Restoration Projects

The 2025 Budget also aims to protect and preserve Malta's historical heritage. Planned projects include:

- **Villa Guardamangia:** Restoration will begin on this historic villa with an investment of €15 million.
- **Major restoration initiatives**, such as the Main Guard building in St. George's Square, Valletta, expected to be completed by 2027.
- **Villa Portelli Restoration.**
- **Vendôme Tower in Marsaxlokk Restoration.**
- **St. John's Bastion Windmill in Cospicua Restoration.**
- **Maritime Museum Restoration**, with completion targeted for 2027.
- **Rehabilitation of the former Tram Station in Marsa**, among other projects.

The 2025 Budget underscores our commitment to enriching Malta's arts, culture, and heritage, fostering a vibrant creative economy, and preserving our unique national identity.



In the budget for 2024, the government strengthened the sense of communities in our island. Hence, the budget for 2025 will continue to build on the previous budget, however now the government is committed to elevated the quality of life of the same communities.

This will be done through various initiatives and schemes:

- **Stronger and Inclusive Communities**

This initiative goes hand in hand with next year's budget as through this scheme, Local Councils will be applying for funds which will lead to strengthen the well-being of our communities. Local Councils' will be in a better position to carry out projects or initiatives to help their communities be stronger and more inclusive.



- **Initiative and Investment in the mental health**

of Maltese and Gozitan residents, through a pilot project, so that one can be given the necessary professional help in their nearest local council.

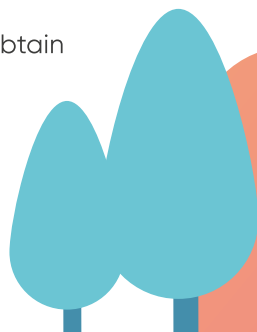
- **Vjal Kulhadd**

the €10million project will continue together with Infrastructure Malta which will eventually lead to a more beautiful and safer localities.

- **A number of other schemes will be continued**

through which Local Councils will be able to obtain funds for the embellishment of their localities, including gardens and open spaces.

**In a nutshell,
through the
budget 2025,
the Government
will continue
to support the
quality of life of
our communities.**



BUDGET 2025

TRANSFORMING JUSTICE AND BUILDING A SAFER FUTURE IN MALTA

As we look ahead to 2025, the Ministry for Justice and the Reform of the Construction Sector is committed to making significant strides in enhancing the justice system and ensuring a safer environment for all Maltese citizens. Our dedication to reform is reflected in substantial investments and initiatives aimed at improving the quality, efficiency, and accessibility of our services.

The Ministry has embarked on a specialisation-centered approach to both industries. In the Justice sector, a significant stride was achieved with the assignment of specifically designated magistrates to lead Magisterial inquiries. While these efforts are in their early stages, significant results are already evident.

Next on the agenda are two critical legislative reforms aimed at enhancing service delivery and creating a more effective and efficient justice system. The creation of a Commercial Court will transition from a section within the Civil Court to a fully-fledged, specialised Court. It is expected that, in the first quarter of 2025, the bill establishing the Commercial Court will be debated in Parliament and eventually enacted into law. This court will be presided over by specialised judges, have its own registry, and, in the coming years, be housed in a separate building in Valletta, which has already been identified.

“The strength of our justice and construction sectors relies heavily on the expertise and dedication of their workforce. This year, we have concluded several collective agreements and are actively recruiting additional professionals within the entities forming part of this Ministry’s portfolio.”

This initiative will serve as the foundation of our vibrant economic system, providing peace of mind for companies and commercial entities, including those in the maritime and aviation sectors, supported by a robust legal and conflict-resolution framework.

The second focus this year will be the reform of the Family Court. Recognizing the sensitive nature of family law cases, a dedicated working group was established to analyze the needs of this sector. The group developed comprehensive recommendations, which went through public

consultation, with the intention of legislative updates, streamlined procedural timelines, and new support services designed to alleviate the challenges faced by families in court proceedings. By emphasizing mediation in civil family matters, we aim to create a justice system that is both compassionate and responsive.

Digital transformation remains a cornerstone of our reform efforts. This year, we launched various digital initiatives to streamline processes and improve access to information across justice bodies. A notable milestone was the €10 million tender for implementing a new Court information management system for the Court Services Agency. This system will enhance case handling and tracking, making our justice system more efficient. Additionally, the Legal Aid Agency Malta has successfully implemented its case management system, with similar advancements planned for the offices of the Attorney General and the State Attorney.

The strength of our justice and construction sectors relies heavily on the expertise and dedication of their workforce. This year, we concluded several collective agreements and are actively recruiting additional professionals within the entities forming part of this Ministry’s portfolio. Increased staffing at the Court Services Agency, including Court Attorneys and Judicial Assistants, demonstrates our commitment to unprecedented investments in human resources.

We are also committed to bolstering the judiciary. The additional judicial appointments this year increased the total number of judges and magistrates to 57—the largest in Malta’s history, and we’re not done yet.

Infrastructure improvements are well underway. The Court Services Agency has enhanced court facilities by adding a new chamber for trials, and plans for a new court building are advancing. This facility will house modern amenities for criminal chambers and additional offices, while discussions are ongoing to finalize the selection process for a new location to house the Gozo Court.



Dr Jonathan Attard,
Minister for Justice and Reform
of the Construction Sector

In the construction sector, we have acted decisively in response to the recommendations from the Jean Paul Sofia inquiry, which emphasized the need for stricter oversight. Legislative changes have been enacted to regulate builders and contractors, while the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) and the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) have increased their capabilities through additional hires and system digitisation.

To support those affected by construction activities, we launched a 24/7 helpline, 138, offering a centralized resource for addressing construction-related concerns. This free service connects affected third parties with lawyers and architects, ensuring professional assistance is readily available.

Our commitment to workplace safety has been reinforced by the recent unanimous approval of the new Health and Safety Act in Parliament. An official register of health and safety experts will help maintain high standards across various industries, while a new OHSA center in Gozo will provide targeted support services for workers and employers.

Lastly, we are dedicated to sustainable development. With €3 million allocated to the BCA, initiatives like Irrinova Darek will enable families to retrofit their homes with sustainable energy solutions, contributing to Malta’s climate goals.

Through these comprehensive reforms and initiatives, the Ministry of Justice and the Reform of the Construction Sector is advancing a vision for a just and safe Malta—one built on progress, responsibility, and a steadfast commitment to serving our nation’s needs for generations to come.



A LEGACY BORN ON THE WATER

Image credit Andrew Schembri / Alex Turnbull



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Budget 2025



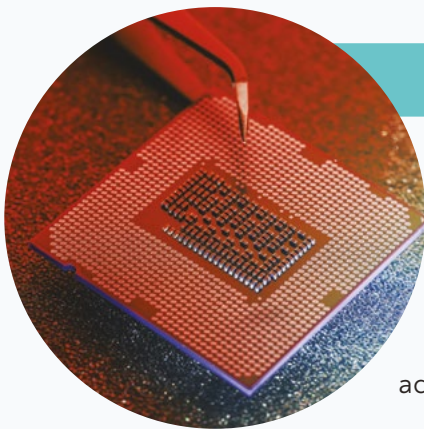
Get Qualified

Malta Enterprise will engage in stakeholder consultations next year. These discussions will focus on ensuring the scheme supports the development of skills needed by industry, with an emphasis on STEM subjects. Aligning the scheme with the growing demand for expertise in these areas, will help position Malta as a leader in technology, and advanced manufacturing, amongst other sectors. A revised proposal will be put forward in 2025, with the new scheme set to launch in 2026.



Competence Centre for the semiconductors

Malta Enterprise will establish a competence centre to enhance Malta's position in the semiconductor sector, aligning with the European Chips Act. This centre will promote innovation, support industry players, and attract EU funding, fostering collaboration between local businesses and academia. This centre will strengthen Malta's role in the European semiconductor supply chain and facilitate technological advances in Industry 4.0 projects.



Aviation Academy

An MRO training academy will be launched via a collaboration between the private sector and Malta Enterprise. The Government will be covering up to 80% of costs. This academy aims to shorten training from 4.5 years to 18 months, enabling immediate skills development in the workplace.





Micro Invest

This scheme supports micro/small businesses by encouraging investment. On average, Malta Enterprise processes over 4,400 applications per year, indicating the scheme's impact across various sectors. As part of the continuous effort to improve and modernise the support provided to businesses, Malta Enterprise will conduct a series of stakeholder consultations throughout 2025. The aim of these consultations is to gather feedback from businesses to refine the scheme, ensuring it meets the needs of enterprises

New Incubation Centre in Hal Far

To further support entrepreneurs, a new incubation centre will be built in the Hal Far industrial area. This investment covers 17,000 square metres and is valued at €33 million, aiming to accommodate 50 new tenants in sectors such as renewable energy, food technology, and smart manufacturing.



StartUp Framework



Following work by Malta Enterprise in the past years under the StartinMalta brand which saw the creation of the Startup Finance scheme and launched initiatives like the Start-Up Festival, a new Startup Framework will be established next year. This will include a one-stop shop to meet all the needs of companies which are just starting up.

Rent Subsidy

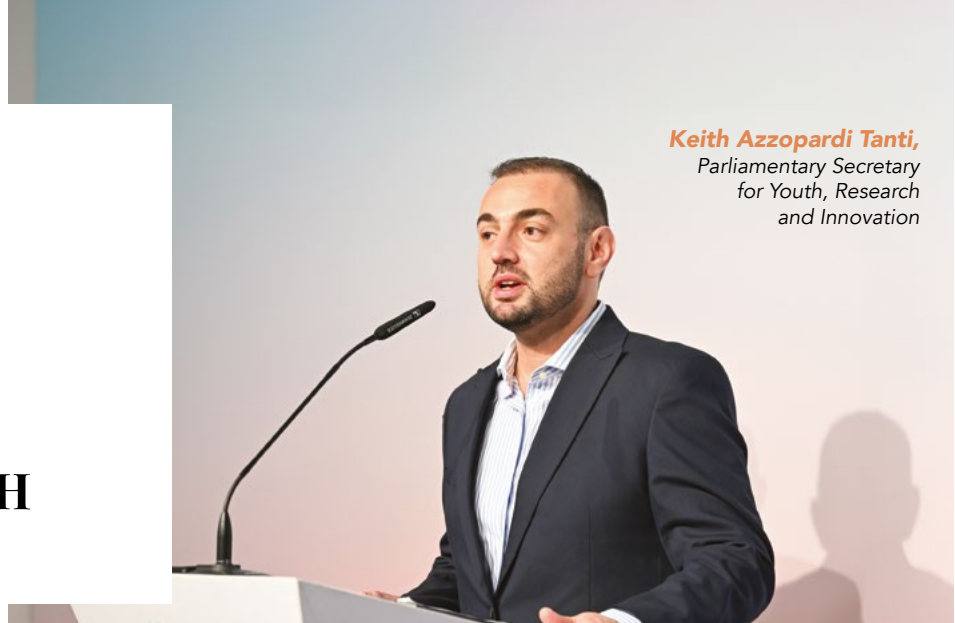
The Rent Subsidy Scheme has been instrumental in supporting small enterprises and entrepreneurs as they establish or expand their operations by providing assistance for renting industrial premises from the private sector. This support has enabled many businesses to lower their initial costs and invest in growth. In response to valuable feedback from the business community, Malta Enterprise is committed to enhancing the Rent Subsidy Scheme. Moving forward, the scheme will be remodelled to include financial assistance for the purchase of industrial premises from the private sector.





SHAPING THE FUTURE OF EXCELLENCE IN YOUTH, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Keith Azzopardi Tanti,
Parliamentary Secretary
for Youth, Research
and Innovation



Parliamentary Secretary Keith Azzopardi Tanti Highlights 2025 Budget Measures for youth empowerment, research, and innovation.

Parliamentary Secretary Keith Azzopardi Tanti has outlined the key initiatives within Malta's 2025 Budget, themed 'Nahdmu Lejn Pajjiż ta' Kwalità' ('Working Towards a Nation of Quality').

This Budget emphasises significant investments in youth empowerment, research, and innovation, aimed at addressing future challenges while positioning Malta as a competitive player in technological advancement.

The measures announced are designed to support young Maltese in various domains such as education, health, and homeownership.

A major highlight of the budget is a groundbreaking initiative in quantum computing, set to commence next year. This ambitious project, supported by partnerships with tech giants such as IBM, Amazon, and Airbus, aims to strengthen Malta's research ecosystem and enhance its digital sector.

Furthermore, funding for Xjenza Malta's FUSION program will increase to €6.3 million, enabling collaboration among public, academic, and private entities on national priorities in health, sustainable resources, aviation, and technology.

For the first time, Malta's Space Sector will receive dedicated funding, with the PECS program in partnership with the European Space Agency seeing an increase to €1.5 million.

An additional €400,000 will be allocated to implement Malta's National Space Strategy (2022-2027). The government plans to introduce a legal framework to establish jurisdiction over space activities, paving the way for commercial ventures and the application of satellite data in sectors like environmental monitoring and agriculture.

The budget also emphasises transformative healthcare solutions, particularly through the

Cancer Research and Innovation Hub Malta (CRIHM), which focuses on advancing cancer prevention and treatment research.

The funding for CRIHM will double to €1.6 million in 2025, facilitating collaboration between medical professionals, AI specialists, and digital technology innovators to enhance cancer care.

This initiative is part of Malta's strategy to become a leader in scientific advancement and community-focused health innovation, with plans to establish the first accredited Cancer Mission Hub in Europe.

"Education and community support are central to the budget, with over 100 schools set to undergo modernisation over the next 13 years, emphasising energy efficiency and sustainability."

The Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA) will receive a substantial budget increase to €1.6 million, tripling previous funding to enhance support services for individuals with disabilities.

A core focus of the Budget is youth empowerment, particularly in education, health, and financial stability. The government has expanded the First-Time Buyers scheme, benefiting nearly 4,900 young applicants by providing increased grants and reduced stamp duty.

This initiative aims to tackle housing affordability, which remains a significant challenge for Maltese youth. Additionally, the government will cover the first six months of gym memberships for individuals born between 2005 and 2007 as part of a wellness initiative promoting lifelong health.

Financial support for youth is further strengthened through adjustments to the cost-of-living allowance and increased educational stipends,

including book grants and parental allowances for post-secondary students.

The Budget also allocates resources for the European Digital Innovation Hub (DiHubMT), supporting young tech entrepreneurs with mentorship and high-performance computing resources, thus nurturing innovation in Malta's digital economy.

The gaming sector, including areas like computer gaming, eSports, and immersive technologies, will receive government support, with provisions for eSports athlete visas to attract international talent and promote cultural exchange.

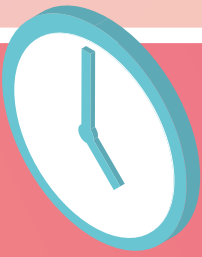
Aġenzija Żgħażaġh plays a crucial role in the youth empowerment strategy, with a 40% funding increase in Budget 2025. This increase supports initiatives like the BOOST scheme, which funds youth organizations and cultural associations, enabling broader activities and engagement for over 60,500 young participants.

Mental health is prioritised with initiatives providing online counselling and workshops in schools, ensuring accessible support for youth. Furthermore, Malta will host two significant youth conferences in 2025 under its Presidency of the Council of Europe.

The European Youth Work Convention and a Ministerial Conference for youth ministers will foster discussions on youth policies, reinforcing Malta's commitment to inclusive and engaged youth-oriented policies on both national and international levels.

In summary, Budget 2025 reflects Malta's commitment to building a resilient future, enhancing its global standing in research and innovation, and fostering an inclusive environment for its youth.

Through strategic investments across various sectors, the government reaffirms its dedication to a prosperous Malta, ready to embrace future challenges and opportunities.



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alleviate PARKING shortages

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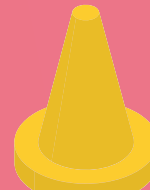


public Transport

New direct bus routes and re-evaluation of the existing ones



improve THE COORDINATION OF road works



effort TOWARDS MORE sustainable active modes of transportation

incentivise CITIZENS to limit the use of passenger vehicles

THE FALLACY OF QUALITY



Justin Schembri,
Shadow Minister for Education

“Malta has seen 214 teachers quitting their professional role last scholastic year, yet this country needs to develop answers that go beyond raising pay to improve teacher’s welfare.”

Next year’s Budget brags about the quality of education, yet it accomplishes little to raise the standard of education in Malta because it leaves out important initiatives. According to Government itself, attention must be paid to raising the standard of education further, yet the solutions are either unwelcome or ambiguous.

It is disappointing, to say the least, that the budget makes no mention at all to new schools. We all recall the Government’s promise, year after year with the Msida primary school. It has now been concluded, years later exceeding the budget by a whopping €10 million!

Now Government opts to maintain schools of over 13 years, totalling to 100. These numbers are unrealistic given that we have seen on multiple occasions that the FTS (Foundation for Tomorrow’s Schools) does not adhere to the deadlines set forth to finish the work in schools.

I believe it is the responsibility of the government to modernise schools and perform the essential maintenance, which has been done with incentives in recent years. The construction of contemporary schools that are appropriate for the times is essential to our policy.

Our children should have access to the greatest learning environment possible. Teachers as well. Ironically, despite Government’s repeated calls for air conditioning in every school, this budget makes no mention of the issue.

Notwithstanding discussing the National Education Strategy’s implementation in this budget, which was introduced a few months ago, Government has yet to provide an action plan for its implementation: a strategy to accomplish its objectives, which are to enhance inclusion holistically and to increase the wellbeing of educators and students.

Malta has seen 214 teachers quitting their professional role last scholastic year, yet this country needs to develop answers that go beyond raising pay to improve teacher’s welfare.

We are still lagging in terms of inclusion, and the primary demands in the sector are not addressed by this budget. I am positive about the Forum for Knowledge about Education (MEFF) mentioned, but I am not totally sure this will succeed.

I reiterate that raising salaries by themselves will not improve educational attainment, particularly for people from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

Thus, it is beneficial to continue highlighting initiatives like ‘Reading Recovery’, but we also must expand their reach to include more children and create several other programs that reach further.

here is little to no mention of higher education in the budget, indicating a lack of direction or a sense of growing disinterest. I take as an example the funding for the Malta Further and Higher Agency (MFHEA) which is unchanged from the previous year, even though it is clear the agency has a number of shortcomings that need to be fixed.

The strategy for Further and Higher Education which was published a few months ago does not appear to be in line with any Government goal presented in Caruana’s discourse.

Similarly, we are witnessing a significant cutback in funding for Lifelong Learning in this budget, which contradicts the premise of prioritising the pursuit of higher education.

Additionally, I would like to draw attention to the fact that MCAST and the University of Malta are hardly mentioned. As MCAST’s financial cut falls short of the University’s, I believe that Malta is wasting another opportunity to strengthen this Institution. Furthermore, the Institute for Education (IfE) is again being brushed to the side.

Government mentions the One Device Per Child (ODPC) program, but it makes no commitment to carry on with the laptop distribution program for Year 7s.

Because of this, it is unclear whether this project will continue, and even though Government has promised to provide laptops to all students in Years 7 and 8 of all schools this year (including private and church ones), it is unclear whether this commitment is carried out or not.

Sadly, there is no discussion of the digitisation of instructional materials, which is crucial for us to begin looking ahead.

I would want to state that the Nationalist Party is in favour of aiding parents who send their children to independent schools.

As we are fully committed to enhance the Get Qualified and Higher Educational Qualifications Schemes, we are not seeing a holistic overall plan for the numerous independent educational institutions locally, mainly those providing for tertiary and higher qualifications.

Diagnosing the Maltese Economy

Current Economic Conditions
and medium-term Prospects



**31 January 2025,
8:30 AM**

at the Malta Chamber



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Details



THE MALTA CHAMBER





Steve Ellul,
CEO of Infrastructure Malta

SHAPING QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR MALTA'S FUTURE



“Vjal Kulhadd is about making spaces safer, greener, and more enjoyable for everyone.”

From urban spaces to maritime hubs, Malta is undergoing a transformation in infrastructure that prioritises quality, sustainability, and community needs. At the helm of this effort is Steve Ellul, CEO of Infrastructure Malta, working closely with his dedicated team to bring a shared vision to life.

This collective approach ensures that development is not only effective but also inclusive, reflecting the diverse needs of Malta's communities.

One of the agency's most ambitious projects is the Msida Creek Project, a development aimed at resolving long-standing challenges while reimagining the area as a modern, accessible, and welcoming urban space.

Speaking about the project, Ellul explains: “Msida has always been a critical junction in Malta, but for years it has suffered from heavy congestion, poor air quality, and flooding issues. With this project, we're addressing these challenges head-on, while also delivering real benefits to the community.”

Scheduled for completion in 2027, the Msida Creek Project has been years in the making, following extensive consultation with residents, businesses, and local stakeholders.

“IM invested a lot of time listening to people who live and work in Msida to ensure the project meets their needs,” Ellul says. “This feedback has shaped what we're delivering, from improved traffic flow to new public spaces.”

Key features of the project include over 19,000 square metres of public spaces – equivalent to three football fields, and 300-metre water canal designed to manage flooding while enhancing the area's aesthetic appeal with pedestrian pathways.

Beyond the Msida Creek project, Ellul highlights the Vjal Kulhadd initiative as another key part of Infrastructure Malta's ongoing efforts to improve public spaces and enhance communities.

“This initiative is about empowering local councils and NGOs by giving them the tools to pro-

pose meaningful improvement to public spaces,” he explains. The programme, which represents a €10 million investment, has attracted significant interest, with 36 applications submitted by 32 local councils – over half of all the local councils in Malta – as well as four NGOs. These applications, currently under evaluation, demonstrate the enthusiasm of communities across the island to participate in shaping their urban environments.

Vjal Kulhadd initiative seeks to move beyond traditional road designs. Proposals under this programme include semi-pedestrian zones, shared mobility options, improved accessibility for vulnerable users, cycle lanes, and the planting of more trees.

“It’s about creating environments that are safer, greener, and more enjoyable for everyone,” Ellul notes.

While Infrastructure Malta’s work on roads is often in the spotlight, Ellul highlights the agency’s significant contributions to maritime infrastructure, including the rebuilding of the breakwater in Bugibba.

The €14 million investment, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, will introduce a new terminal with safer facilities for ferry passengers. The breakwater will also support sea transport services to other locations around the island while providing better protection for mooring vessels.

Ellul also reflects on the agency’s work in sustainable marine solutions, particularly the onshore power supply (OPS) projects. He explains that Infrastructure Malta’s OPS journey began in 2019, at a time when the concept was still largely unfamiliar in Europe.

“In November 2023, IM commissioned the Mediterranean’s largest OPS facility, delivering 64 MVA of shore power across 16 connection points at five quays in Valletta’s North Harbour and Boiler Wharf. This project, co-financed by the Connecting Europe Facility, marks a significant step toward reducing emissions and noise pollution.”

The impact of OPS on the environment and local communities is profound. “Ships using shore power in Valletta will achieve a 40% reduction in

CO₂ emissions, with airborne pollutants reduced by up to 99%,” Ellul explains. “This technology also reduces noise pollution, which directly improves the quality of life for the 17,000 families living near the port and the thousands of workers in the area.”

Encouraged by the success of the first OPS project, Infrastructure Malta is now embarking on a second phase.

“We’re investing €44 million, co-funded by the Just Transition Facility and Connecting Europe Facility, to extend OPS to nine additional quays in the South Harbour region and Lascaris Wharf,” Ellul says.

Once completed, this expansion will increase Malta’s OPS capacity to 100 MVA, enabling a wider range of vessels - including cargo ships, RoRo, and tankers—to use cleaner shore power.

Ellul emphasises the importance of maintaining high-quality standards as Malta aligns its ports with the EU’s 2050 net-zero carbon targets. “Decarbonisation is essential for the future of maritime operations,” he says.



Infrastructure Malta, Shore to Ship - Onshore Power Supply



Infrastructure Malta, Msida Creek Project

“Onshore Power Supply is a testament to our commitment to quality and sustainability.”

“OPS is a critical part of this, but it’s not the whole solution. We also need to prepare for alternative fuels like LNG and hydrogen, which require adaptable infrastructure.”

For Ellul, these challenges are an opportunity to innovate. “We’re transforming Malta’s ports into energy hubs powered by cleaner energy sources, while embracing sustainable practices across every facet of port operations—from shipping to logistics and warehousing.”

As Infrastructure Malta continues to lead these efforts, Ellul is optimistic about the future.

“Our projects reflect a commitment to quality – not just in design or construction, but in the long-term benefits they bring to people and the environment. By investing in sustainable solutions today, we’re laying the groundwork for a greener, more resilient Malta.”



Xjenza Malta Panel on Research and Innovation during the 2024 edition of R&I EXPO.

A VISION FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION THROUGH STRATEGIC FUNDING



In a rapidly evolving global landscape, research and innovation (R&I) are pivotal for sustainable growth, economic development, and addressing pressing societal challenges. Omar Cutajar, Senior Director at Xjenza Malta, sheds light on the organisation's strategic funding initiatives, industry collaborations, and international R&I partnerships.

With an increased allocation for the FUSION national portfolio for R&I programmes, and a bold vision for sectors such as health, smart manufacturing, marine and maritime technologies, sustainable resources, aviation, and even space research, Xjenza Malta is positioning Malta as a key player in the European R&I ecosystem.

Xjenza Malta has significantly expanded its budget to support the FUSION programme, growing from €5 million to €6.3 million, thanks to the new appropriations provided by Government's 2025 budget.

The FUSION programme is an umbrella portfolio encompassing basic research, applied research, and commercialisation efforts, thus designed to cultivate a thriving ecosystem for research and innovation.

“We aim to nurture ideas from the conceptual stage to commercialisation,” explains Mr Cutajar. “It’s not just about research; it’s about turning hypotheses into groundbreaking solutions.”

For instance, the 2024 funding round under the ‘Research Excellence Programme’ one of several funding streams under FUSION, saw the support of 39 projects with an average allocation of €80,000 per project, focusing on diverse themes such as health, sustainability, and aviation.

The introduction of FUSION TDP Lite is another game-changer. This ‘lighter’ version of the Technology Development Programme allows expedited research, particularly for emerging technologies, such as app development, where rapid turnaround is critical.

In November 2024, the full-fledged FUSION TDP programme was launched, offering funding between €300,000 and €500,000 for three-year collaborative research projects, requiring the involvement of the private sector.

Beyond FUSION, Xjenza Malta’s partnership with the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) has fostered targeted initiatives, including €1.7 million allocated for top-down projects addressing national priorities in the area of emerging digital technologies. Additionally, collaboration with the Cancer Research Innovation Hub Malta resulted in an Eur600k funding for four critical projects.

The National R&I Strategic Plan (2023-2027) places a strong emphasis on bridging the gap between academia and industry. Xjenza Malta plays

a central role in implementing this framework through its Strategy and Policy unit.

“The strategy serves as a compass, ensuring our funding projects align with national public policy goals while consolidating Malta’s R&I environment,” says Mr Cutajar.

“Xjenza Malta ensures Malta’s research priorities align with broader European goals, with allocations of no less than €500,000 per partnership call on an annual basis, addressing specific topics related to the clean energy transition, the transformation of healthcare systems and the sustainable blue economy.”

Over €9 million in funding has been disbursed across various programmes in 2024. To foster industry-academia collaboration, Xjenza Malta has established networks enabling researchers, industry players and public entities to forge new partnerships, both locally and internationally.

The challenge lies in navigating cultural and operational differences between academic institutions and industry. However, with targeted incentives and support structures, Xjenza Malta is confident in creating a cohesive R&I environ-

ment that effectively promotes innovation and commercialisation.

Malta’s National Space Strategy, implemented through a partnership with the European Space Agency (ESA), marks a significant milestone for the country. In 2024, Malta became an official ESA PECS partner, paving the way for a five-year collaboration.

The ESA PECS agreement allocates €1.5 million annually for space-related initiatives, open to private and public entities alike.

“Our vision is to position Malta as an emerging yet competitive player in the European space industry,” Cutajar asserts.

This funding supports research in areas such as satellite technology and communications, and space-based data applications, offering internationalisation opportunities for Maltese researchers.

Additionally, Malta’s involvement within the ESA PECS programme underscores the country’s commitment to leveraging space technologies for economic and societal benefits.

Xjenza Malta actively fosters international partnerships to enhance Malta’s R&I portfolio. Collaborations with Mediterranean countries under the PRIMA programme focus on food security and water scarcity, while bilateral agreements with countries such as Italy, Turkey and China drive knowledge and mobility exchanges, and the development and implementation of joint research projects.



Group photo of the Xjenza Malta Team.

Cutajar highlights the importance of these initiatives, saying, “Through international collaborations, we tackle SMART thematic areas in health, environmental sustainability, and clean energy, amongst others. These projects ensure Malta remains aligned with European R&I priorities.”

Since 2019, Xjenza Malta’s Internationalisation Unit has disbursed €7.5 million across 42 projects, with beneficiaries spanning academia, private entities, and public organisations.

Xjenza Malta anticipates further growth in disbursements and outcomes, as a result of its expanding participation in Horizon Europe partnerships.

Xjenza Malta ensures Malta’s research priorities align with broader European goals, with allocations of no less than €500,000 per partnership call on an annual basis, addressing specific topics related to the clean energy transition, the transformation of healthcare systems and the sustainable blue economy.

In 2025, a new R&I partnership under the ‘One Health and Microbial Resistance’ initiative will address pressing issues such as antibiotic resistance.

Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Centro Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR) in September 2024, is now enabling Maltese researchers to access onboard ship-time on the Italian flagship research vessel Gaia Blue, facilitating critical maritime studies.

To support researchers in pursuing larger, multinational projects, Xjenza Malta offers stepping-stone networking grants, such as the Research Networking Scheme (RNS). These incentives encourage Maltese researchers to participate in international consortia, enhancing Malta’s presence on the European and global R&I stage.

With a strategic vision grounded in robust funding and collaboration, Xjenza Malta is transforming Malta into a hub of innovation. By fostering industry-academia partnerships, supporting researchers, and addressing global challenges through targeted initiatives, Xjenza Malta is setting the stage for a sustainable and knowledge-driven future.

As Xjenza Malta looks forward to 2025 and beyond, its efforts will not only strengthen Malta’s R&I ecosystem but also position the country as a significant contributor to global advancements in health, sustainability, technology, and more.



Xjenza Malta beneficiary showcasing a prototype during the 2024 edition of R&I EXPO.

“The introduction of FUSION TDP Lite is another game-changer. This ‘lighter’ version of the Technology Development Programme allows expedited research, particularly for emerging technologies, such as app development, where rapid turnaround is critical.”



Principal Investigators of Xjenza Malta funding Programmes during the 2024 edition of R&I EXPO.



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MALTA'S QUALITY OF LIFE DEPENDS ON TRUE ENVIRONMENTAL REFORM



Rebekah Borg,
Shadow Minister for the Environment

“Despite previous support for energy efficiency initiatives, Malta has one of the lowest home energy efficiency improvement rates in the EU. Similarly, while we can all get behind measures for clean air, Malta still leads the EU in greenhouse gas emission increases.”

Quality of life is made up of important elements like health, security, and personal finances, all working together to keep society balanced. The environment supports these elements as a powerful, often unseen, force that can either improve or harm community wellbeing.

It is important to understand that the environment is more than just greenery - it includes air and water quality, smart urban planning, and resource management.

When the environment suffers, this balance is thrown off, leading to problems with public health, economic stability, and social cohesion. Understanding how the environment connects to other aspects of life is crucial for real progress.

The Malta Chamber, in its Pre-Budget Document for 2025, acknowledged this concept by emphasising that Malta faces significant challenges in infrastructure, over-construction, waste management, and the uptake of renewable energy.

It pointed out that traffic congestion, poor urban planning, and environmental damage hurt quality of life and drive away valuable investment. This shows the need for comprehensive strategies that go beyond just economic growth and focus on sustainable development and well-being.

Many organisations, including the Nationalist Party, have raised these issues for years, but unfortunately, they are still being ignored. While the government has released many policy documents and plans, especially on the environment, these ideas remain on paper without real action.

This year's budget, despite being called 'A Country of Quality', once again fell short of addressing the environment's full role in quality of life. Although there were some positive steps, the environmental strategies lacked coordination and long-term vision. This shows a repeated pattern where economic growth is pursued at the cost of environmental care.

A fundamental shift is needed to place the environment at the core of every policy. The Budget's measures reflect more of the same, and this continuity is certainly not good news. While the ideas may look good on paper, without genuine commitment across ministries, they lack the conviction for real change.

Despite previous support for energy efficiency initiatives, Malta has one of the lowest home energy

efficiency improvement rates in the EU. Similarly, while we can all get behind measures for clean air, Malta still leads the EU in greenhouse gas emission increases.

The waste-to-energy incinerator project, still plagued by conflicts of interest, was notably absent from the Budget speech, and its capital cost was reduced by 26 million euros.

Promises of open space projects were repeated, while new renewable energy initiatives were missing. Offshore energy projects remain a distant hope rather than a reality.

No indications were provided on how to address drainage issues after Malta was found to be in breach of its EU obligations over discharges from wastewater treatment plants, with the court ruling that two treatment plants lacked the necessary capacity to ensure proper water treatment.

Public upkeep is another key part of how the environment affects quality of life. Clean and well-maintained public areas encourage social interaction and community pride, boost local business, and help reduce crime. Keeping public spaces clean and in good condition creates a healthier environment and better urban living.

The Nationalist Party supports an economic model that makes environmental sustainability a priority. Policies should focus on conservation, reducing pollution, and long-term savings by preventing environmental damage.

These efforts help protect natural areas, support healthier communities, attract investment, and ensure economic stability.

To move forward, national priorities need to change. Environmental considerations should be central to policy-making, with cooperation across different government departments to meet sustainability goals.

Without this, even well-intentioned plans will fail due to poor execution. Improving quality of life through caring for the environment is not an extra concern - it is essential for effective governance.



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Mr Brian Vella,
CEO of the Malta Food Agency

SAVOURING THE FLAVOURS THAT IGNITE DELIGHT



As restaurants abound and proliferate in this tiny country, they have brought with them an increasingly discerning palate. For most of us, the food we savour at a restaurant is frequently very different to that which we are used to in the privacy of our homes. Different however, does not mean better or worse. It means a changed perspective. Mr Brian Vella, CEO of the Malta Food Agency is a great believer in promoting local food and in the goodness of fresh produce.

Fruit of the earth and work of our hands

The Malta Food Agency was born out of a heightened awareness of the need to ensure food supply security. Mr Vella stated that following the pandemic, most countries looked to their food security supplies and serious thought was given to sustainability and self-sufficiency to some extent.

“The Malta Food Agency was born out of the need to address the need for sufficiency in food supply,” explained Mr Vella.

Set up in 2021, its vision is to be a leader in raising the quality and value to local food products and to promote these locally and in international markets.

To move towards this vision and be part of the solution for adding value to food, Mr Vella said that the Agency works to support and strengthen the transformation of food along the value chain, supporting sales and marketing from production, trading, processing, and food manufacturing.

“This is not a restaurant, and we do not want to look at it as a restaurant, [...] but it will serve local specialities and be a platform for innovation.”

Mr Vella said that the Agency's vision and mission are aligned to the fundamental principles of the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy – for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system - and the strategic objectives of the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food, and Animal Rights, particularly in terms of fostering sustainability and competitiveness of agriculture and fisheries, strengthening the institutional capacity, and improving market access and fair trading.

In order to add value to food from farming and fishing, the Agency works towards various goals.

In a sector which is one of the most traditional and slow to change, Mr Vella sees the Malta Food Agency as a way to foster collaboration among farmers and fishermen and improve their bargaining power and position in the food chain. He underscored that the land and sea produce are considerable players in the economy.

“At the fruit and vegetable market, the Pitkalija, we see some €30 million throughput per annum. To this we need to add what goes through the fish market, the Pixkerija, as well as the Farmers Market. These are the three main elements or outlets for those who engage in agriculture and fisheries in Malta,” said Mr Vella

A means of social and cultural interaction

While attending the Pitkalija and the Pixkerija are not on everyone's 'to do' list, a visit to the Farmers Market is much more of a probability for the average person.

“We are currently working on a project which will tot up to €10 million or so to create an appropriate space for a Farmers Market,” explained Mr Vella. An area almost the size of three football fields, 14,000 square metres has been earmarked at Ta' Qali for this purpose.

The concept is to encourage shopping of fresh food and direct access to local produce from fruit and vegetables to fish and to artisanal goods.

“This will be a hub of interaction between producers and consumers, and it will help to foster economic growth,” stressed Mr Vella.

And, realising that the way to the heart lies through the stomach, this Farmers Market will also have an eatery. “This is not a restaurant, and we do not want to look at it as a restaurant,” said Mr Vella emphatically, “but it will serve local specialities and be a platform for innovation.”

An incubation centre

The idea of innovation in a market as conservative as agriculture and fisheries is intriguing.

Mr Vella elaborated: “We have obtained EU funding under the Off-Farm Productive Investments scheme, and we are building an incubation centre. This basically, is a site where one may develop a culinary idea and bring it to fruition.”

He added that such a hub would provide areas for fruit, vegetables, dairy, fish and other produce to be processed. There will be a food testing lab and areas for a new product to be developed as well as a show kitchen for demonstrations. “This will facilitate entry into the market for new, innovative products which can even earn a DOC appellation,” added Mr Vella.

The search for new markets is top of mind for Mr Vella and for new markets to be conquered, the Maltese product needs to be on point and innovative. He explained how the Malta Food Agency has helped local producers to exhibit their wares abroad, both near such as Taormina and as far-flung as Japan where Maltese olive oil is now a thing.

“We seek niche markets to add value to our produce, to expand our connections and to sustain the 'farm to fork' strategy,” explained Mr Vella.

Waste not, want not

Pope Francis, ever mindful of the needs of the have-nots, was very direct: “Throwing away food is like stealing from the table of those who are poor and hungry.”

The Malta Food Agency carries forth this philosophy. Mr Vella said that the agency seeks to minimise food waste by re-distributing unsold food items nearing expiration to voluntary organisations.

Currently, he explained, at the Pitkalija and the Pixkerija, charitable institutions are called to collect what is not sold. “Then what is not collected is sent to Wasteserv and composted. This compost is given freely to farmers,” said Mr Vella.

He further explained that ‘We are also planning to launch a campaign on these lines, reaching out to the general public, so we keep hammering the message, putting in the effort before throwing away something. We will be introducing an app which is easy to use and at the same time efficient.

The app, which was developed through an inter-agency dialogue with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations will pair up the needs



“We seek niche markets to add value to our produce, to expand our connections and to sustain the 'farm to fork' strategy,[...]”



of the charitable institutions with the food which is nearing expiry.

This link between benefactors and beneficiaries is designed as a ‘win-win’ since the benefactors can then obtain tax benefits for participating in the scheme and not throwing the food away.

But IT is not being used only in this scenario. A traceability barcode scanner is also being set up. Mr Vella explained that this barcode can be scanned by mobile and will give information as to the provenance and date of the product.

“The Malta Food Agency was born out of the need to address the need for sufficiency in food supply,”[...]

“So, one may scan a barcode which indicates that the vegetables were bought ten days previously while someone may be trying to sell them as ‘fresh’. This means that the consumer is protected against fraud” said Mr Vella, adding that this will be linked to the Pitkalija system for enhanced traceability.

Malta’s food ecosystem is crucial to the independence of the island’s economy. While, in an interdependent world, no country is truly an island, when geography isolates you, you need to take suitable precautions.

The Malta Food Agency is taking those steps to ensure the security of local produce supply. In that process, it is helping the consumer to savour the local flavours and ignite culinary delight.





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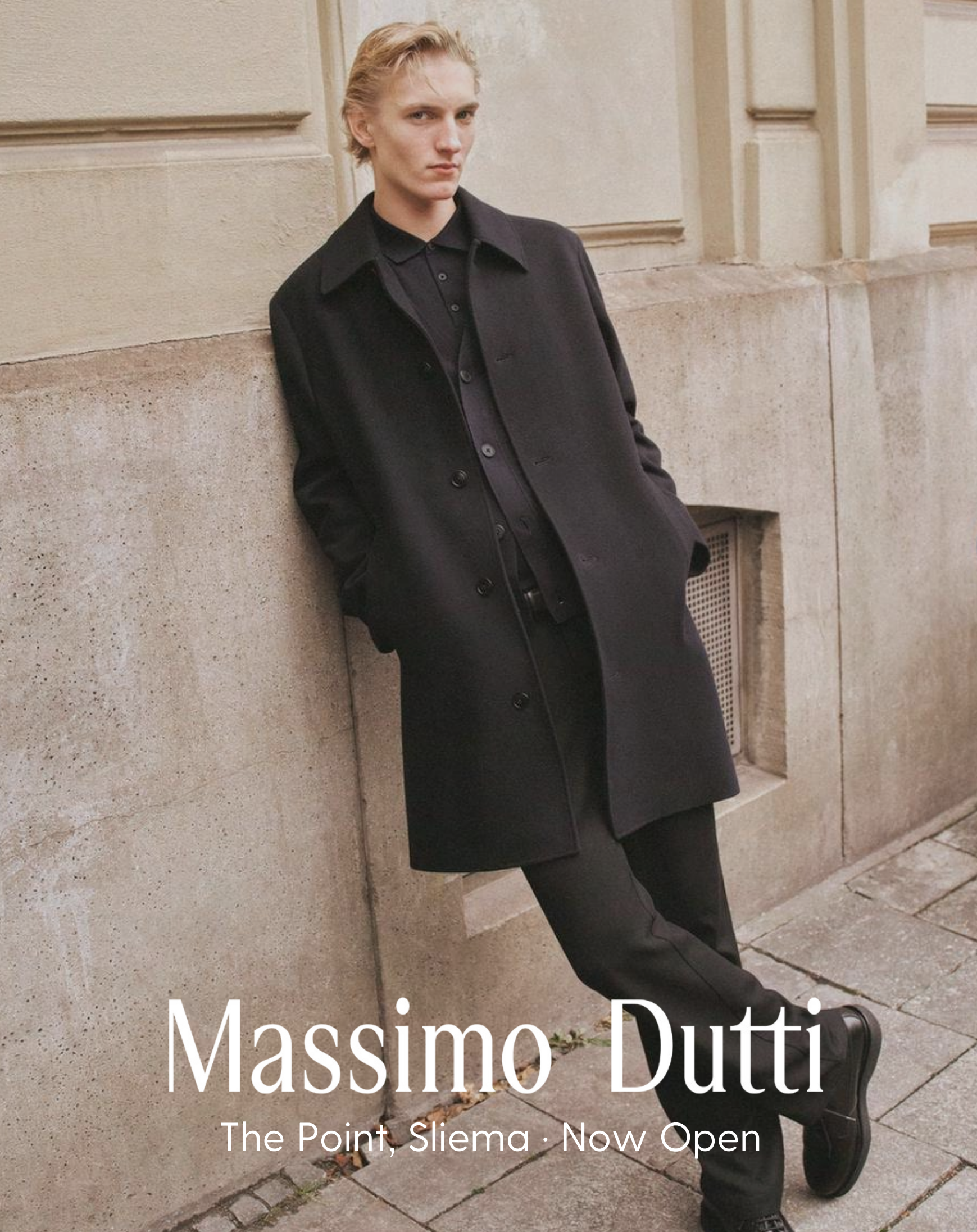
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WANTED A GOVERNMENT WHICH DELIVERS

Budget 2025 is yet another missed opportunity.

These are the very challenges we must address if we are to progress as a country. Instead, this budget lacks vision, direction, and solutions.

Two recent business surveys - the EY Attractiveness Survey among larger investors and the SME Barometer among smaller firms - highlight these issues clearly. Citizens have also spoken loudly in recent polls.

Yet rather than addressing these concerns, the Budget merely promises more strategic plans in the future, with no concrete solutions for the problems already identified.

“Instead of providing a clear plan for Malta’s future, this budget appears to be aimed primarily at securing the Prime Minister’s immediate political survival. What Malta needs, however, is a government willing to confront our real challenges with long-term solutions.”

While there are some positive measures, including initiatives long advocated by the PN and other stakeholders, they fall short of compensating for the overall lack of ambition in this Budget.

Instead of providing a clear plan for Malta’s future, this budget appears to be aimed primarily at securing the Prime Minister’s immediate political survival. What Malta needs, however, is a government willing to confront our real challenges with long-term solutions.

It comes as no surprise that the PN - and many other stakeholders, including social partners - are highly sceptical of the government’s theme of

shifting ‘from quantity to quality’ in this budget. For over a decade, we have warned that the government’s relentless pursuit of growth by inflating the population and prioritising low-cost labour over high-value jobs is unsustainable and damaging.

‘Quality over quantity’ has been the PN’s mantra for years, yet time and again, the government dismissed our concerns - only to now make an abrupt turnaround. Even the slogan ‘Towards a Country of Quality’ is an implicit admission of how far we are from that goal.

During the past nine years, the average real growth in annual net earnings were below 1% for all household types. Eurostat figures show that in 2021 and 2023, real increase in wages contracted for all household as salary increases paid in these years were below the annual inflation rate.

If the analysis had to be extended to 2015, the reality of Maltese families didn’t improve much as real salary increases during the period were close to just 0.6%.

Mismanagement, as seen with the 400 million euros lost on the hospitals’ fraudulent deal, has not brought value to taxpayers. Additionally, this budget offered no vision for new economic niches or strategies to diversify and strengthen our economy against future shocks. Instead, it has left Malta’s financial stability on shaky ground.

Adjusting course as circumstances change is understandable, but true commitment to quality would include a serious action plan. This budget, however, offers little evidence that the government is genuinely moving in this direction.

In 2021, the government presented a vision for 2031, and more recently, Miriam Dalli introduced her vision for 2050. Now, we are told to expect yet another 2050 vision next year.

We are ready to support it with our ideas, but by now, we should be discussing the performance of the vision launched three years ago, reviewing and adjusting its milestones rather than starting a new one from scratch.



Jerome Caruana Cilia
Shadow Minister for the Economy
and Enterprise

Our scepticism is grounded in experience. We’ve heard promises of medical tourism, blockchain island, a new metro system, and many other grand ideas that never see the light of day.

How can we believe that this new vision will be implemented when the government cannot even maintain a green wall? Everyone will be holding Government accountable to ensure that such vision is implemented following a genuine consultation period.

This is why a government that created these problems is not the one to solve them. The PN will continue to push for policies that genuinely enhance the quality of life and economic value for all citizens. This is the party that transformed the economy earlier this decade, attracting new sectors that remain the backbone of our economy today.

We will increase productivity levels by creating quality jobs and focusing on high value-added investment. We will focus on investing to improve our quality of life.

Our hope and courage come from our belief in the skills of the Maltese and Gozitan people, who, when listened to and given direction, succeed for themselves and for our country.

With the people’s trust, the Nationalist Party will be a government that delivers.



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MALTA'S 2025 BUDGET

SHORT-TERM RELIEF, LONG-TERM CHALLENGES AHEAD

The 2025 Budget presented for Malta offers a mix of positive measures. While some immediate benefits may be seen, the Budget lacks the strategic foresight needed to ensure sustainable progress for the nation.

One of the more prominent features of the 2025 Budget is the reduction in personal tax rates. While these cuts are likely to provide some short-term relief, they are not a cure-all for the broader challenges Malta faces.

These tax reductions, although welcome, are neither groundbreaking nor historic and do little to tackle the root causes of the nation's structural issues.

Malta's rapid population growth is placing immense pressure on the country's infrastructure, with growing concerns over traffic congestion, inadequate public transport, and overcrowded urban spaces.

As the number of vehicles on the road rises, daily commutes have become increasingly difficult for many residents. At the same time, the public transportation system remains inefficient, unable to keep pace with the demands of the growing population.

The Budget offers little in terms of solutions to the strain on infrastructure, with few mentions of policies that could help alleviate the burden of overpopulation.

There is a glaring absence of strategic planning for sustainable urban development or initiatives to enhance the public transport system. Malta needs a clear plan to manage urban growth, modernise infrastructure, and ensure that future development is sustainable.

Malta's healthcare system continues to face significant challenges, especially as the population ages and healthcare needs increase. Public hospitals are under immense pressure, leading to longer waiting times and growing reliance on the private sector for those who can afford it.

This disparity between public and private care highlights the widening gap in access to essential services. The Budget fails to address the root causes of these issues or to allocate sufficient resources to improve the quality and accessibility of healthcare.

The country's energy infrastructure is also under strain, with the electricity grid struggling to meet

demand, especially during peak periods. While energy consumption continues to rise, the infrastructure needed to support this growth remains insufficient.

Although there have been some efforts to transition to renewable energy, progress has been slow, and Malta remains overly reliant on fossil fuels.

One of the most glaring omissions in the 2025 Budget is the lack of significant focus on environmental sustainability. Malta has experienced a construction boom in recent years, resulting in widespread urban sprawl, the destruction of natural landscapes, and increasing pollution.

"The unchecked expansion of urban areas, coupled with the loss of green spaces, threatens the quality of life for future generations. A comprehensive strategy to protect Malta's environment, reduce carbon emissions, and promote sustainable development is sorely needed."

The unchecked expansion of urban areas, coupled with the loss of green spaces, threatens the quality of life for future generations. A comprehensive strategy to protect Malta's environment, reduce carbon emissions, and promote sustainable development is sorely needed. Without such a strategy, the country risks further environmental decline.

Despite Malta's growing economy, a significant portion of the population remains at risk of poverty. Recent statistics reveal that many families are struggling to make ends meet, with rising living costs and stagnant wages contributing to growing income inequality.



Graham Bencini,
Shadow Minister for Finance

The Budget does not take adequate steps to address these disparities, nor does it ensure that the benefits of economic growth are more widely distributed.

Malta's attractiveness as a destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) has been on the decline, according to the 2024 EY Malta Attractiveness Survey. Factors such as strained infrastructure, political and regulatory concerns, and governance issues have contributed to a less favourable investment climate.

The 2025 Budget fails to address these critical concerns, missing an opportunity to restore confidence in Malta's ability to attract and retain foreign investment.

Perhaps the most significant shortcoming of the 2025 Budget is its lack of a clear, long-term vision for Malta's future.

The country faces a range of complex challenges - traffic congestion, environmental degradation, poverty, corruption, and a strained public sector - that require bold, strategic action. Instead of offering a cohesive, forward-thinking plan to tackle these issues, the budget seems focused on short-term fixes.

For Malta to truly thrive in the coming decades, the government will need to take bolder, more comprehensive action to address infrastructure, healthcare, energy, environmental sustainability, and social inequality. Without a clear and ambitious vision for the future, Malta's trajectory remains uncertain.



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NEW FHRD PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP SCHEME SETS STANDARDS FOR HR COMPETENCE IN MALTA

The Malta Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD) has launched a new Professional Membership Scheme. This individual certification will allow HR professionals to get recognised by FHRD for their level of HR Competence. This falls in line with FHRD's mission to set national standards in the development of human resources in Malta.

The Professional Membership Scheme has three levels: Associate, Fellow, and a membership developed exclusively for students seeking a career in human resources. Prospective candidates will have the opportunity to submit applications for any level, provided that they meet the specified eligibility conditions.

Apart from forming part of a thriving local network, enhancing your professional credibility, and enriching your HR journey, key features of the Professional Membership Scheme include:

- A Password-Protected Dashboard specifically tailored to serve as a comprehensive platform for all Human Resources stakeholders.
- Exclusive Access to Industry Insights: Members will gain privileged access to cutting-edge research and articles by experts in the field, providing them with a competitive edge in their professional endeavours.
- Tailored Professional Development Opportunities: The scheme will offer a range of workshops, seminars, and training sessions conducted by industry experts to enhance members' skills and knowledge.
- Networking Events and Forums: Members will have the opportunity to connect with professionals, industry leaders, and experts through exclusive networking events, fostering collaboration and partnerships.

FHRD has developed a framework of HR Competencies based on nine Functional Competencies and nine Enabling Competencies.

Functional Competencies relate to those skills required to perform tasks that are within the scope of HR Professionals while Enabling Competencies are more strategic Competencies that are not specific to the HR profession, but which are deemed essential.

These Competencies are divided into three core areas:

- 1. Individual Skills** - Personal skills are recognised as soft skills which are not easy to teach. They are also known as interpersonal or 'people' skills.
- 2. Team Skills** - Teamwork skills consist of inter-related abilities that let you work effectively in an organised group. Teamwork skills are vital to employers, as teams are a basic organisational

unit within many companies. Teamwork happens when people cooperate and use their individual skills to achieve common goals.

- 3. Organisational Skills** - Organisational skills are your abilities to manage time effectively, prioritise tasks, set goals, and develop systems for achieving those goals. Employees with good organisational skills can juggle multiple responsibilities simultaneously, stay focused on deadlines, and handle complex projects efficiently.

Each of the above core areas has three Functional and three Enabling Competencies as listed below:

Individual Skills

Functional Competencies

1. Organisational Effectiveness
2. People Analytics
3. Talent Acquisition

Team Skills

Functional Competencies

1. Compensation and Reward
2. Talent Management
3. Engagement and Wellbeing

Organisational Skills

Functional Competencies

1. Employee Relations
2. Inclusion and Diversity
3. Learning and Development

Associate Membership Level

This level is specifically tailored for HR professionals at the junior to mid-level who fulfill operational or administrative responsibilities.

An associate member is envisioned to occupy roles such as HR Administrator, HR Generalist, HR Specialist, HR Business Partner, HR Assistant Manager, or an HR Manager with an operational focus (who reports to the Chief HR Officer or a Senior Manager in an HR function).

Enabling Competencies

1. Critical Thinking
2. Tech Savvy
3. Research Skills

Enabling Competencies

1. Emotional Intelligence
2. Decision Making
3. Business Acumen

Enabling Competencies

1. Ethical Behaviour
2. Negotiation and Influence
3. Strategic Leadership



Karen Muscat Baldacchino,
Chief Executive Officer, Malta Foundation for Human Resources Development

The Associate Membership acknowledges one's work experience and professional knowledge in the field of Human Resources.

Fellow Membership Level

This level is intended for a senior-level HR professional who engages primarily in a strategic role, possesses numerous years of HR experience working on strategic projects, and consultancy, and forms part of an organisation's senior management team.

Fellow Membership acknowledges one's vast work experience and substantial professional knowledge in the field of HR.

Student Membership Level

The Student Membership is aimed at aspiring human resources professionals. It acknowledges a person's dedication to academic advancement in the field of human resources and positions them on the path to professional recognition. This membership applies only to full-time students.

Renewals of the Associate and the Fellow Memberships will be possible subject to the candidate attending a number of HR-related events. The total number of required hours is 16, of which 10 must be in FHRD-organised events. The remainder can be obtained in any HR-related event as long as a certificate of attendance is provided to the FHRD.

FHRD was set up in 1990 to spearhead the evolution of people management and development practices as well as the human resources profession in Malta.

The Foundation is an autonomous, private, independent body and works in partnership with its corporate members, the professional conglomerate of HR practitioners and service providers, leaders of the industry, and other key local players in the field of human resources management and development.

For further information about the scheme please visit: <https://fhrd.org/professional-membership/>

For any inquiries, please feel free to reach out via email at: professionalmembershipscheme@fhrd.org



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A VISION FOR A BALANCED AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Since 2013, Malta has witnessed a booming economy driven by population growth and consumption. While the economic numbers look promising, the current model's underlying effects have left our quality of life strained.

Increased traffic congestion, higher housing costs, stretched public services, and a widening gap between economic growth and the revenue generated by foreign workers have created challenges that our country can no longer afford to overlook.

It is time for a bold shift toward a more sustainable and socially driven economic model, one that brings growth and quality of life back into balance.

As the Shadow Minister for Employment and New Economic Sectors, I envision a path forward based on a socially sustainable economy, one that nurtures local talent, safeguards high-quality jobs, and attracts new industries offering high-value employment.

This vision is rooted in agile principles that prioritize participation, empowerment, and quality, while focusing on practical, actionable outcomes for both businesses and citizens.

“By focusing on high-value, sustainable industries, we can reduce the need for low-wage, low-contribution jobs, protecting our quality of life while enhancing Malta’s competitiveness on the world stage.”

A collaborative and innovative approach to economic growth

A Nationalist government would approach economic transformation with a dual role: as a legislator, setting the framework for sustainable development, and as a facilitator, enabling the private sector to thrive within that framework.

This facilitative role is vital for encouraging growth that aligns with our nation's needs and goals, and it begins with meaningful collaboration with current industry leaders.

We believe that Malta's existing industries hold immense potential to evolve and thrive with the right support. By working with industry practitioners and specialists, we can modernise and reinvent these sectors, ensuring they are more resilient, innovative, and capable of sustaining high-earning jobs.

This proactive reinvention is essential not only to preserve employment but also to meet the demands of a competitive global market.

Cultivating new economic sectors for high-value jobs

Our vision goes beyond preserving the old; it is about nurturing the new. We aim to create a robust ecosystem where emerging industries can flourish, generating high-value jobs that attract and retain top talent.

This is not a quick fix, it is a commitment to long-term growth through strategic planning, skill development, and partnerships that span local and international borders.

To support this, we will foster a holistic 'eco-solution' that includes targeted education initiatives, extensive upskilling programs, and strategic partnerships. This eco-solution will be structured around:

- **Education and skill development:** From primary education to lifelong learning, we must align our educational system with the skills demanded by future industries. With dynamic training and upskilling pathways, our workforce will remain resilient and adaptable.
- **Start-up and scale-up ecosystems:** By promoting a vibrant entrepreneurial culture, we can encourage innovation and job creation. A Nationalist government will support start-ups and scale-ups through grants, mentoring, and infrastructure, allowing new ideas to transform into successful, job-creating ventures.
- **Skills bank:** A central skills repository will provide employers with access to a readily available and diverse pool of talent. This database would identify skills in demand, enabling targeted training programs and swift talent matching.



Ivan J Bartolo,
Shadow Minister for Employment and
the Creation of New Economic Sectors

- **Strategic partnerships:** We will actively pursue collaborations with international leaders to bring knowledge, technology, and investment to Malta. Our partnerships with foreign experts will bolster emerging industries and ensure we remain on the cutting edge of global economic trends.

A people-centric economy for a prosperous Malta

This vision for Malta's economy is rooted in a deep respect for our country's most valuable asset, its people. We believe in an economy that serves not just investors or numbers but the broader Maltese society.

By embedding socially sustainable practices in our economic model, we can address the growing pressures on infrastructure, housing, and public services.

Our commitment is clear: a Nationalist government will work to provide Malta's business community with an environment where growth is both economically rewarding and socially responsible.

By focusing on high-value, sustainable industries, we can reduce the need for low-wage, low-contribution jobs, protecting our quality of life while enhancing Malta's competitiveness on the world stage.

The path ahead is challenging, but I am confident in Malta's ability to rise to the occasion.

With the right policies, a cooperative spirit, and an unwavering commitment to sustainability, we can build an economy that not only grows but thrives, lifting the quality of life for all Maltese people and establishing Malta as a global model of balanced and inclusive economic growth.



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A NEW LIFE FOR AN OLD ARCHIVE

Since July, The Malta Chamber has embarked on a new project which will completely transform its archives. Running the institution for 176 years has inevitably produced thousands of documents and paperwork, from correspondences, petitions, protests, complaints, registers, insurance policies, minutes to publications, photos, and more. Nowadays, most of these records survive as an excellent record of Malta's commercial history.

These documents are found in two archives at The Malta Chamber. Combined, these two spaces hold over 150 metres worth of material.

Other locations at The Malta Chamber, such as the Council Room, hold more recent material such as minutes but also decades' worth of photographic material.

From photos of the council in the 1920s, Queen Elizabeth's (then Princess) visit in 1949 to luncheons in the 1990s, the photographic material is an equally important sub-collection.

It is understandable that the vast majority of people have never set foot in any archive and hold

the conception that they are dark places full of boring paperwork. While this is not entirely false, one must appreciate archives as a deposit of memory.

Without archives, we would not have history itself. Most archives do not know the entire extent of their collections but preserve it for posterity with different interests.

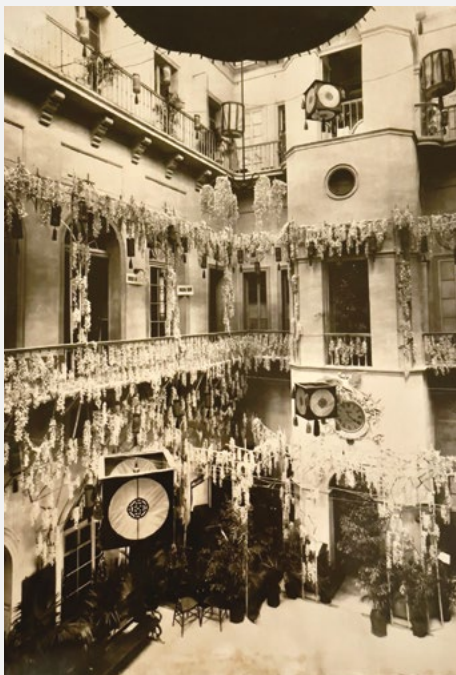
A correspondence to import pianos in Malta might have no value in the present but a hundred years later it could be the sole surviving document with a company's letter-head and the old address, besides containing information on the operations of the firm itself.

More so, such documents are a comprehensive record of the products imported into, exported from, sold or traded within Malta and make up a history of commodities used daily in various contexts, from home kitchens to ship building.

It is with such an understanding in mind that we can begin to appreciate the real value of The Malta Chamber's collections.

For the last 176 years, the Chamber has been at the centre of the island's commercial life. This is especially true before the advent of computer technology and internet since most business opportunities and commercial exchanges were done through the Chamber.

Business and social events became intertwined at The Malta Chamber as people could only meet potential business partners, exports, importers, wholesalers, and retailers in such spaces dedicated for such exchanges.



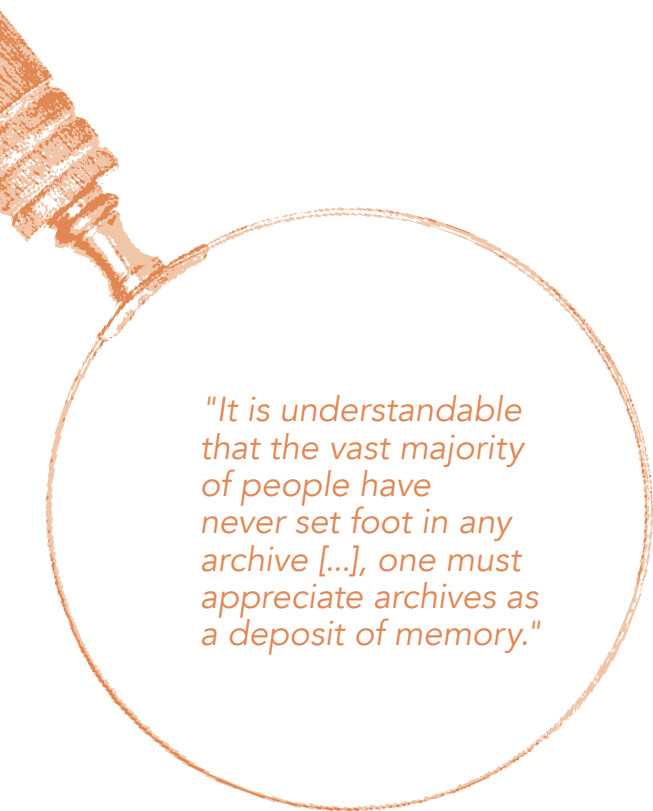
The Chamber's courtyard with oriental decorations, date unknown. This original photo was donated by Charles Paul Azzopardi.



Renovations on the Chamber's portico.



Streets filled with onlookers as Princess Elizabeth arrived at the Chamber in 1949.



"It is understandable that the vast majority of people have never set foot in any archive [...], one must appreciate archives as a deposit of memory."

More so, commercial disputes were almost always resolved through The Malta Chamber. Thus, the archive can be described as the material residue of such agreements and confrontations: thousands of documents containing an island's history worth of commercial exchanges.

However, the archives are more than just commercial history. For example, material with registered trademarks, logos and letterheads also serve as a record of local and international design.

The archive is valuable to a variety of researchers from different backgrounds and interests, from photography to military history.

Equally important is material from the digital age which will also form part of the archive. While the Chamber looks towards the future, its accomplishments in the distant and recent past will find a home in the Chamber's renewed archive.

In practice, the project is split into three phases. The first phase, which is almost complete, is the creation of a comprehensive register of all documentation held by the Chamber.

This is standard for any archive and an invaluable tool for any researcher. In addition, the catalogu-

ing of the Chamber's collections, which ranges from paintings to sculptures, furniture, fixtures and gifts.

It is not common for buildings that have been around for almost 200 years to have furniture and features in situ from the earliest days of its existence. Less so from the very first years it opened, but the Chamber is certainly one of them.

One of which is a cabinet donated by the first president himself, Sir Agostino Portelli, in 1848 which makes it almost a decade older than the building itself.

The Malta Chamber also holds minutes of one of its predecessors, the Society of British Merchants, with documents dating back to 1808.

Phase two will consist of anoxia treatment for all documents held by the archives and a complete refurbishment of the archive rooms themselves.

Lastly, the third phase will see the archive enter the digital age with the digitisation of a significant proportion of the collection as well as its promotion through social media.



Part of a series of old photos of the Chamber's interior spaces.



A registered trademark from the Chamber's trademark collection dating back to the early 20th century.



The Chamber's archival records prior to the treatment and reorganisation started November.

EY FUTURE REALISED ENVISIONING TOMORROW, TODAY



Ronald Attard,
EY Malta Managing Partner

In October 2024, we hosted our annual flagship event, Future Realised, marking its twentieth edition. This event has become the premier forum for discussing Malta's economic trajectory. As always, we had the unwavering support of The Malta Chamber, various decision-makers, and some 1,000 attendees.

Our goal is to unite Malta's decision-makers, influential thinkers, and industry leaders to reflect and debate on leveraging our strengths and finding innovative solutions to our challenges.

Over the past two decades, our surveys have tracked Malta's attractiveness to investors. While some factors have remained consistent, much has evolved.

Tax benefits and telecommunications infrastructure continue to be strong pull factors, but challenges like labour costs, skills shortages, and political and regulatory stability have emerged.

Despite these challenges, Malta's small size remains a key advantage. Like a nimble sailing boat, our country can swiftly adapt to changes and implement innovative solutions. This agility is crucial as we navigate future economic landscapes.

Key areas needing attention include workforce skills, tax reform, and infrastructure. Education and technology are vital for maintaining Malta's appeal. Investors are keen on enhancing and nurturing investment across various sectors, including education, energy, and health.

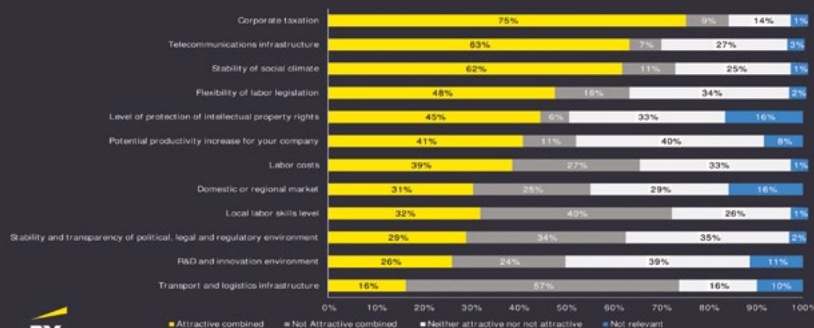
As we look to the future, embracing technology and fostering collaboration will be essential. Our small size allows us to be efficient and forward-thinking, competing on a global stage. By integrating policies, infrastructure, and education, Malta can create a cohesive environment where technology thrives.

Malta's ability to adapt and innovate is our greatest strength. As we continue to evolve, collaboration and innovation will be key to our success.

"Like a nimble sailing boat, our country can swiftly adapt to changes and implement innovative solutions. This agility is crucial as we navigate future economic landscapes."

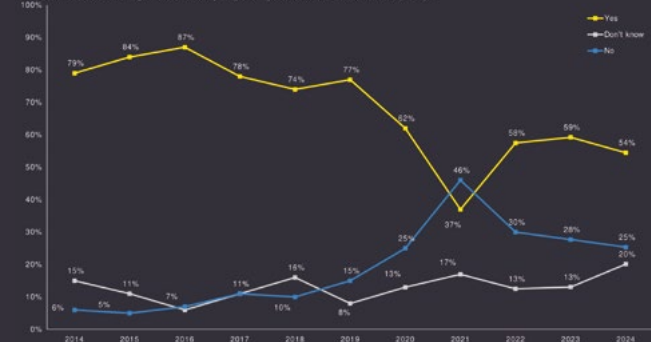
Malta's FDI Attractiveness Scoreboard

Please rate each criterion listed below, whether in your Company's interests, Malta is attractive or otherwise as a location where to expand, develop or retain investment activities



Malta's current FDI attractiveness

Q: Is Malta currently attractive for foreign direct investment (FDI)?



SNAPSHOTS FROM
EY FUTURE REALISED MALTA 2024





Sebastian Debono,
Director, Maypole Group

MAYPOLE EXPANSION TO SERVE OUR CLIENTS BETTER

In running a business, like in any other activity, there can be no room for complacency. Every single day brings a new beginning, with new challenges and ever-shifting circumstances and situations.

We at Maypole, operate on the philosophy that our major, indeed majority, partners are our clients. Therefore, we have to adapt to constantly cater for their changing needs and satisfy their wants. As the Maltese expression goes, 'Is-Suq isuq!' ('The market decides').

For the past few decades, the Maypole group has expanded its activities both qualitatively and quantitatively, in response to the demands posed by the market.

Over the years we have seen our operations going from a small, family-run bakery to a large-scale industrial bakery operation, supported by an ever-growing network of retail outlets.

The manufacturing and logistical capacity of our headquarters in Handaq, The Bakery, was initially more than enough to cope with the volume of our production, distribution and sales, but our growth curve meant that we had to increase the size and capacity of the complex.

Our customers' busy schedule mean that it is up to us to make sure that Maypole retail outlets provide a one-stop-shop for daily necessities, in key locations that make stopping for a loaf of bread, and other grocery items, as easy as possible.

At the moment, we have no less than 29 such shops spread all over Malta and Gozo, with the distinctive green Maypole logo making them a landmark in their own right.

The latest addition to the chain is the one in Marsaskala, strategically located in Sant' Antnin street, the main thoroughfare leading in and out of the town. We have also move our Mosta outlet

to newer and bigger premises, which are better able to cater for the increased demand in that hub locality.

All Maypole shops, be they Maypole-owned or franchised, are committed to deliver the same wide range of own-produced fresh and frozen baked items, as well as other grocery items provided by our business partners – from fresh milk to deli items.

Another major development in the direction in which we are steering our service is in response to a more health-conscious clientele. With more health and nutrition information being available, people are becoming more mindful of what they eat.

We have proactively encouraged this trend with our own informative, socially responsible spots on both traditional and social media.

Our message has always one of advocacy for healthy eating, not only for general fitness, but also to help people living with specific health conditions like diabetes, hypertension, gluten intolerance and coeliac. In parallel with our educational contribution, we have expanded our range of products to suit the requirements of these persons.

At our shops we offer what we named the Loaf GI, which is bread with a low glycaemic index, meaning that since it raises blood sugar levels slowly, it is ideal in managing diabetes and as part of weight loss programmes.

The popular Maltese loaf is also offered in 'Less Salt', 'No Salt', 'Low Carb', 'Wholemeal' and 'Multigrain', giving a choice to those among us

who still want to enjoy the taste of the wholesome hobża tal-Malti without any significant negative impact.

For coeliac sufferers we also offer gluten-free products, while the sourdough range, due to its long fermentation time, also has reduced gluten and carb levels, while still retaining its tasty character.

For those with a sweet tooth who need to reduce their sugar consumption for some reason, our retail outlets all stock the no-sugar ice-cream range.

Our development in this direction comes from a healthy mix of our business philosophy to cater for all needs, complemented by our sense of social responsibility and strong commitment to healthy eating.

All in all, we are proud to say that as a business involved in so many aspects of the food trade, from baking to retail to restauration, we are in a state of constant development. This could not be evinced better than by our poles in the restaurant business.

“Our message has always one of advocacy for healthy eating, not only for general fitness, but also to help people living with specific health conditions like diabetes, hypertension, gluten intolerance and coeliac.”

On one end, we have the traditionally baked fare offered in our Nenu The Artisan Baker restaurants in Valletta and Mgarr, where one can enjoy dishes that have stood the test, and the taste, of time.

On the other end, we have the modern F’IDI burger joint in Qormi, which caters for those who prefer the fast food culture in which groups of young, and even older, people get together over a quick, mouthwatering snack, knowing that in its preparation within the Maypole culture, we have still given the necessary attention to keeping this type of food as healthy as possible.

In conclusion, we can say that as the population grows in numbers, cultural diversity and individual requirements, we grow in parallel with it. That way, we can continue to maintain our competitiveness, and our position among the market leaders in the food business on the Maltese Islands, and hopefully, in the future, even beyond.



Maypole's new outlet in Marsaskala.



Fresh ftira is always a must in Maypole's bread counter.



Cheese counter at Fgura and Marsaskala outlets.

BUILDING MALTA'S FUTURE

A VISION BEYOND SHORT-TERM FIXES FOR LASTING COMPETITIVENESS AND GROWTH

This Budget was a lost opportunity, missing the mark on essential reforms needed to strengthen Malta's economic resilience. The government neglected crucial measures for productivity - a cornerstone of sustainable growth - and failed to address the competitiveness challenges that businesses in Malta face.

Without a comprehensive approach to these critical issues, businesses are left to absorb the impact of rising operational costs and regulatory burdens without the support of strategic policies that would enable them to thrive.

While some budget elements, like tax deductions and increased children's allowances, offer some relief, they are isolated benefits that should have been part of a cohesive economic plan.

Instead of aligning these measures within a structured, long-term vision, the budget presents a patchwork of proposals that do little to address Malta's deeper economic challenges.

What is needed is a truly effective budget that not only meets immediate demands but aligns with Malta's long-term goals, systematically tackling economic obstacles while fostering a collaborative environment with social partners.

The Nationalist Party believes that a forward-looking budget should include tangible initiatives that enhance productivity across the board.

Key reforms, such as streamlining processes and investing in workforce skills, would position Malta favorably on the global stage, enabling businesses to grow without excessive operational constraints.

Moreover, improvements in infrastructure would address current bottlenecks, creating an environment where productivity gains translate into genuine economic growth. This is essential for the long-term sustainability of Malta's economy - a vision that the Nationalist Party is committed to achieving.

One area where the Budget fell particularly short is in supporting businesses through the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). The government's stance on taxing COLA is not only flawed but counterproductive, especially when social partners unanimously support exempting it from taxation.

The purpose of COLA is to help employees cope with inflation, and taxing it undermines that purpose. A Nationalist government would commit to making COLA tax-free, ensuring that workers receive this benefit in full, while providing relief to employers who bear the added financial burden.

By doing so, we would create a balanced approach that upholds fairness and maintains the health of our economy.

Beyond the immediate issues of COLA, this budget lacks the continuity and strategic direction needed to foster long-term growth. The Nationalist Party believes that a budget should be more than a collection of short-term fixes; it must build toward a shared vision for Malta's economic future.

"Over recent years, the Malta Chamber has engaged with the government on no fewer than 19 distinct economic visions, yet few of these have moved beyond paper. These delays have created uncertainty and hindered growth, leaving businesses without the stability they need to plan effectively."

Over recent years, the Malta Chamber has engaged with the government on no fewer than 19 distinct economic visions, yet few of these have moved beyond paper. These delays have created uncertainty and hindered growth, leaving businesses without the stability they need to plan effectively.

The Malta Chamber's pre-Budget document, 'Time Up', provided a robust way forward for addressing Malta's productivity and competitiveness challenges. It included over 200 proposals, yet sadly only 1.8% were fully implemented, with a further 18.7% partially adopted.

A Nationalist government would treat such insights with respect, working closely with the business community and social partners to enact policies that have real, lasting impact.



Ivan Castillo,
Shadow Minister
for Maritime
Affairs, Social
Dialogue,
and the Fight
Against Rising
Cost Of Living

The Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) would evolve from a discussion platform to an actionable body of influence, ensuring that recommendations from social partners translate into policy changes.

This collaborative approach would address crucial concerns, such as the costs associated with Malta's ports and the impact of the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), allowing businesses to operate in a truly competitive environment.

Furthermore, the Nationalist Party recognizes that competitiveness is not just about lowering costs; it is about creating a robust ecosystem where businesses can innovate and expand.

By fostering an environment that encourages research, skills development, and ethical governance, Malta can attract investment and talent, fueling an economy that benefits everyone.


The recent EY conference underscored the urgency of addressing skills gaps, governance issues, and tax-related challenges. Under a Nationalist administration, these concerns would be prioritised, with strategic reforms to ensure Malta's attractiveness on a global scale.

Ultimately, Malta deserves a government that builds with purpose, guided by a shared vision for long-term prosperity. Large companies require stability and continuity in policy, and a Nationalist-led government would be committed to a collaborative, structured approach.

By aligning with social partners and implementing a forward-thinking economic strategy, we would ensure that Malta's productivity, competitiveness, and resilience become the foundation of our future.

In summary, this budget's shortcomings are emblematic of a system focused on short-term fixes rather than sustainable solutions.

The Nationalist Party is committed to driving change, working with stakeholders to implement policies that not only meet immediate needs but build a thriving, resilient economy for generations to come.



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prosperity this festive time.

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