

GENERAL WORKERS' UNION

BUDGET 2027

A Fairer, Higher-Value and People - Centred Malta

National Economic and Social Proposals

Central proposition Malta's economic success must be translated into higher living standards, stronger rights, quality employment and sustainable public services for all.

Formal submission to

The Prime Minister of Malta and the Minister responsible for the Economy

August 2026

Foreword

The General Workers' Union submits these proposals for Budget 2027 at a moment when Malta has the economic capacity—and the social responsibility—to pursue a more ambitious model of development. Strong growth, high employment and an improving fiscal position must now be converted into higher real incomes, stronger public services, better infrastructure and a more sustainable quality of life.

This submission brings together the priorities of the Union and its sections in one national position. It preserves the practical experience of workers across the economy while presenting a coherent programme for Government action. The GWU's objective is clear: economic policy must serve people, reward work fairly and ensure that no worker, pensioner, family or community is left behind.

The Union offers these proposals in a spirit of constructive social dialogue and stands ready to work with Government, employers and civil society on their design, implementation and evaluation.

General Workers' Union

Malta | August 2026

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Executive Summary

The GWU's test for Budget 2027

The Budget should be judged by whether it moves Malta decisively towards a higher-value, higher-wage and socially sustainable economy—not simply by the headline rate of growth.

Malta enters the 2027 budget cycle with strong output growth, very low unemployment and public finances that have improved faster than earlier projections. These conditions provide room for purposeful investment. At the same time, renewed price pressures, slowing nominal wage growth, housing costs, labour shortages and strain on infrastructure risk weakening the lived value of economic success.

The GWU therefore calls for a Budget organised around four commitments: protect household purchasing power; raise the quality and reward of work; invest in social resilience and public services; and steer growth towards sustainability, productivity and balanced regional development. The measures proposed below should be developed through genuine social dialogue, with clear budgets, implementation timetables and public reporting.

Priority actions for Budget 2027

Maintain electricity, fuel, grain and essential-food price support, including a renewed, strengthened and properly enforced Stabbiltà fil-Prezzijiet scheme.

Modernise the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), pay it in June and December, keep the adjustment tax-free, align tax bands with COLA and strengthen Additional COLA support.

Develop a national Living Income benchmark that reflects contemporary housing, healthcare, technology and household costs.

Improve contributory and non-contributory pensions, address identified pension anomalies and establish a National Social Fund for workers facing sustained hardship.

Launch a properly evaluated 32-hour working-week pilot and legislate a nationwide right to disconnect, while expanding family-friendly and hybrid-working arrangements.

Guarantee equal minimum pay from age 16, fair premium pay for Sundays and public holidays for all sectors, and modernised Work Regulation Orders.

Make skills development a workers' right through Individual Learning Accounts, paid apprenticeships, certified vocational pathways and a ban on unpaid internships and traineeships.

Establish a worker-centred framework for artificial intelligence, including prior consultation, transparency of automated decisions and collective bargaining over algorithmic management.

Accelerate social and affordable housing, activate vacant properties and improve fair access to first-home assistance.

☑Continue the investment drive in health, mental-health services and workplace prevention; establish a National Active Ageing and Employment Programme supporting older-worker participation, lifelong learning and age-friendly workplaces; and invest in Gozo Hospital.

Deliver sustainable mobility, better public transport and safer infrastructure, with targeted measures for Gozo and major employment areas.

Implement the Tourism Skills Passport and a comprehensive Seafarers' Charter, with firm timelines and enforcement.

Strengthen labour inspection and occupational health and safety, particularly in construction, fisheries, maritime work and exposure to extreme heat.

Reform the immigration appeals process through a statutory determination period of no more than twelve months, protected access to lawful employment for non-criminal appellants, and a one-time regularisation mechanism for administrative or procedural irregularities.

Modernise employment justice by fully funding Industrial Tribunal reform, clearing the inherited backlog, strengthening DIER registry capacity, simplifying enforcement of final awards and improving access to timely, affordable and digitally accessible employment-justice services.

Finance long-term social commitments through compliance and fair, broad-based revenue measures rather than restraint on labour and essential services.

1. Economic Direction and Shared Prosperity

Recent performance and outlook

The Maltese economy has continued to expand at a pace well above the euro area average, even as growth gradually moderates. Real GDP grew by 4.0 per cent in 2025, with the National Statistics Office recording a particularly strong 6.4 per cent year-on-year expansion in the final quarter, the fastest since mid-2024, driven by household consumption and government spending. Provisional NSO estimates for the first quarter of 2026 show real growth of 3.9 per cent, with nominal GDP reaching €6.2 billion, an increase of €402.2 million over the same quarter of 2025. Services remained the principal engine, contributing 3.5 percentage points to gross value added, led by financial and insurance activities (up 9.0 per cent), information and communication (5.3 per cent), and professional, scientific and technical activities (4.7 per cent), with domestic demand accounting for 3.6 percentage points of growth.

The comparison with the rest of the European Union is stark: first-quarter growth in Malta was roughly five times the euro area rate, and the the Government has noted that the economy grew around six times faster than Italy's and thirteen times faster than Germany's. Looking ahead, the Central Bank of Malta's latest projections, published in mid-2026, forecast real GDP growth of 3.7 per cent in 2026, 3.6 per cent in 2027, and 3.8 per cent in 2028, led by private consumption and supported by the recent income tax reforms. The European Commission's Spring 2026 forecast similarly projects 3.7 per cent in 2026, easing to 3.6 per cent in 2027 as external conditions, including renewed energy price pressures and heightened geopolitical uncertainty, become less favourable.

A new economic direction

Of particular significance to this submission, the NSO's first-quarter release shows that compensation of employees rose by €232.5 million to a record €2.8 billion, an increase of more than 9 per cent year-on-year and the largest single component of the rise in nominal GDP. The General Workers' Union welcomes this evidence that labour income is participating in growth, but it does not dispute the headline figures so much as question their distribution. Growth that is sustained by high volumes of labour input, population expansion, and low-wage employment places mounting pressure on housing, infrastructure, and public services, while too little of the value created reaches ordinary households. In this assessment the GWU is not alone: the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, in its pre-budget submission, structured its proposals around the pillars of Vision 2050 and pressed concerns on competitiveness, productivity, population pressures, skills, environmental sustainability, procurement transparency, and enforcement, while the UHM – Voice of the Workers has publicly called for a revisiting of the country's economic model with a stronger focus on labour market policy, and employer bodies have repeatedly questioned the sustainability of a model reliant on population growth. The GWU urges Government to treat this convergence among the social partners, expressed through the MCESD, as the organising principle of Budget 2027: the budget must be judged not on the size of the economy but on whether it decisively shifts Malta towards a higher value-added, higher-wage model, and on whether the implementation of Malta Vision 2050 remains inclusive and people-centred.

2. Cost of Living and Household Security

Renewed price pressures

The disinflation trend celebrated in recent budgets has partially reversed across Europe. Eurostat data show euro area annual inflation climbing steadily through 2026, from a low of 1.7 per cent in January to 3.2 per cent in May, before easing to 2.8 per cent in June, with the flash estimate for July back up at 2.9 per cent; energy prices, up by more than 10 per cent year-on-year at the peak, have been the dominant driver, feeding through into services and food. Malta is not immune: the Central Bank of Malta projects domestic HICP inflation at 2.5 per cent in both 2026 and 2027, revised upwards by 0.2 and 0.4 percentage points respectively on account of imported inflation from the Middle East conflict, while the European Commission expects 2.7 per cent in 2026, after 2.4 per cent in 2025.

Maintain targeted price support

Both institutions note that the direct impact on household energy bills is being neutralised only by the Government's continued subsidisation of retail electricity, fuel, and grain prices, an intervention the GWU has consistently supported and expects to be maintained in full in Budget 2027. Similarly, the Stabbiltà fil-Prezzijiet scheme for essential food products must be retained, extended, and rigorously enforced against abuse.

Modernise COLA and establish a Living Income standard

The Union must nonetheless be critical of the growing disconnect between measured inflation and workers' lived experience. The Cost-of-Living Adjustment for 2026 was set at just €4.66 per week, down from €5.24 in 2025, at the very moment that inflation was re-accelerating towards levels the Central Bank now expects to persist through 2027. The squeeze is compounded on the wage side: the European Commission forecasts nominal wage growth per employee slowing from 4.2 per cent in 2025 to 3.5 per cent in 2026 and to just 2.1 per cent in 2027, a rate below the inflation projected by both the Commission and the Central Bank for that year, implying an outright decline in real wages precisely in the year this Budget will govern. A mechanism that awards its lowest adjustments while essential prices are still rising, in an economy heading towards real wage stagnation, is not fulfilling its protective function. NSO data underline the scale of dependence on corrective measures: in the first half of 2026 alone, 101,270 households were awarded the Additional Cost-of-Living Adjustment.

In 2026, the GWU gave this critique concrete form, publicly stating that the COLA mechanism, dating back to the 1990s, no longer reflects how families live or spend today: the underlying basket was designed before rents rose sharply and before mobile telephony and technology costs became unavoidable household expenses. Because the adjustment is based on the previous year's inflation, it compensates workers only after households have spent months absorbing higher prices. The GWU therefore formally proposes that COLA be paid in two instalments, in June and December, to narrow the gap between rising costs and the compensation workers receive, alongside a comprehensive modernisation of the basket to include housing, rent, technology, and healthcare costs. The Union further renews its Budget 2026 proposals that COLA income remain tax-free and that tax brackets be adjusted in line with COLA increases and calls for the development of a "Living Income" standard reflecting real living costs. In the interim, the Additional COLA mechanism for low-income households must be strengthened, and forward COLA estimates should be shared with collective bargaining

negotiators as originally agreed.

3. Public Finance, Social Protection and Fair Revenue

Use fiscal space responsibly

Malta's fiscal performance has improved considerably faster than earlier official projections had anticipated. The general government deficit fell to 2.2 per cent of GDP in 2025, from 3.4 per cent in 2024, aided by strong revenue growth and significant tax windfalls, and the European Commission forecasts it remaining at around 2.2 per cent in 2026, comfortably below the 3 per cent threshold and ahead of the schedule for exiting the Excessive Deficit Procedure. The Central Bank of Malta's mid-2026 projections are more favourable still, foreseeing the deficit narrowing to 1.9 per cent in 2026, 1.7 per cent in 2027, and 1.6 per cent by 2028, with the debt-to-GDP ratio, which the Commission expects to stabilise at around 46 per cent, declining to 44.1 per cent by 2028 on the Bank's figures, far below both the 60 per cent Maastricht reference value and an EU average that Eurostat places above 80 per cent of GDP and rising. This outperformance removes the principal argument for fiscal restraint on social expenditure.

Pensions and social benefits

The GWU acknowledges that Budget 2026 adopted several socially significant measures for which the Union had pressed, including a €10 per week pension increase, the harmonisation of the pensioners' cost-of-living bonus at €21.53 per week from 2027, wider family tax bands, higher children's allowances and in-work benefits, and improved carers' grants. These are welcomed. However, the Union is critical of any narrative that now invokes consolidation to defer further social investment when the deficit is already below target, and it resubmits the structural social commitments left unimplemented: increases in both contributory and non-contributory pensions with greater rises for those aged over eighty, the 23 per cent increase in pensionable emoluments for members of the disciplinary forces, workplace mentoring roles enabling pensioners aged 61 to 64 to work part-time while drawing their pension, and stricter enforcement against employers who fail to pay social security contributions.

Active Ageing and Older Worker Participation

Malta's ageing population should be approached not only as a social-policy challenge but also as an opportunity to retain experience, skills and institutional knowledge within the labour market. Budget 2027 should therefore allocate dedicated funding for a National Active Ageing and Employment Programme aimed at increasing and sustaining labour-market participation among persons aged 55 and over. The programme should provide targeted financial incentives to employers that retain, recruit and retrain older workers, while supporting flexible working arrangements, phased-retirement pathways and reasonable age-friendly workplace adaptations.

The programme should be supported by a strong lifelong-learning component, with particular emphasis on digital skills, reskilling and upskilling, structured mentoring and intergenerational knowledge-transfer schemes through which experienced employees can pass on technical and organisational expertise to younger workers. Such measures should recognise the economic value of experience while helping workers remain confident and productive as occupations and technologies evolve.

Dedicated resources should also support workplace health promotion, ergonomic

improvements and preventive measures that enable older employees to remain in employment safely and sustainably. These initiatives should be accompanied by effective enforcement of protections against age discrimination in recruitment, training, promotion and retention. By investing in active ageing, Malta can help address labour shortages, preserve valuable skills, strengthen productivity and social inclusion, and ensure that older workers who wish and are able to remain economically active continue to be recognised as valued contributors to the workforce and to society.

A National Social Fund

Building on this framework, the Union has proposed, in 2026, the establishment of a National Social Fund: a structured fund to provide sustained support to workers facing specific, long-term hardships, complementing the existing social security framework. Budget 2027 should allocate seed capital and define the governance of this Fund in consultation with the social partners.

Housing, health and Gozo

In its 2026 series of meetings with Cabinet members, the Union pressed for accelerated delivery of social and affordable housing, which Budget 2027 must fund with defined targets, alongside capital investment in Gozo Hospital and in mental health services.

Fair and sustainable revenue

At the same time, the Union notes with concern that interest expenditure is rising and that age-related spending is projected to increase from 16.7 per cent of GDP in 2024 to 25.6 per cent by 2070, among the steepest increases in the EU. Budget 2027 must therefore use today's fiscal space deliberately: to fund the pension, healthcare, and long-term care commitments of tomorrow, and to broaden the revenue base fairly, through better tax compliance and the taxation of under-taxed wealth and economic rents, rather than through burdens on labour. The Union will continue to scrutinise the medium-term fiscal-structural plan under Regulation (EU) 2024/1263 to ensure budgetary discipline is aligned with social justice.

4. Quality Employment, Skills and Workers' Rights

From labour-market tightness to real wage progress

The labour market remains among the tightest in the EU. Unemployment stands at around 3.0 per cent, placing Malta consistently among the handful of Member States with the lowest rates in Eurostat's monthly rankings. The Central Bank of Malta projects it edging down to around 2.9 per cent over its forecast horizon. Employment grew by 3.9 per cent in 2025, underpinned by inflows of foreign workers. Yet, as the European Commission observes, this did not reduce labour shortages: vacancy rates continued to increase, confirming that shortages are now structural rather than cyclical. Employment growth is expected to slow to around 3.2 per cent in 2026 and 3.1 per cent in 2027, moderating further to 2.3 per cent by 2028 on the Central Bank's projections, while competition for talent in technology, healthcare, and financial services remains intense. Most concerning for workers, nominal wage growth per employee is forecast by the Commission to decelerate from 4.2 per cent in 2025 to just 2.1 per cent in 2027, at or below projected inflation, so that the record compensation levels recorded by the NSO in early 2026 risk giving way to real wage stagnation. The GWU maintains the pillars set out in its previous submissions, namely fair compensation, skills

development, and inclusive participation, now reinforced by the priorities announced by the Union during 2026, and insists that Budget 2027 must move from framework to implementation.

Fair compensation and retention

Compensation packages must extend beyond basic wages to include health insurance, occupational pensions, and structured career progression. The wage-support measure introduced in Budget 2026, under which Government part-finances increases for long-serving employees, is a step in the right direction but must be evaluated transparently and must not substitute for genuine collectively bargained wage growth. The Union renews its publicly announced proposals for an equal minimum wage for all workers from the age of sixteen, and for double pay for work performed on Sundays and public holidays.

Skills and training

Malta must significantly expand vocational education, workplace learning, and paid apprenticeships. The GWU repeats its proposal for Individual Learning Accounts providing paid educational leave, and for mandatory skills certification across sectors, so that upskilling becomes a right of the worker rather than a discretionary cost of the employer.

Fair governance of artificial intelligence

This imperative has acquired a new dimension. Addressing the 114th Session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva, the GWU set out its position on Artificial Intelligence: training and reskilling must be recognised as a workers' right rather than an individual burden; productivity gains from AI must translate into better wages, improved work-life balance, and stronger social protection; consultation with workers' representatives must be mandatory before AI systems are introduced in workplaces; workers must enjoy a right to explanations of automated decisions affecting performance, working hours, and discipline; and collective bargaining must extend to algorithmic management, data protection, and mental health. Budget 2027 should provide the legislative and financial framework to give effect to these principles domestically, and must ensure, as the Union pressed in its 2026 meetings with Cabinet members, that the digital transition is fair and inclusive.

Work-life balance and family-friendly measures

The Union renews its Budget 2026 proposal for a pilot project on a 32-hour working week, drawing on positive international experience, and calls for the legal entrenchment of the right to disconnect outside working hours. As announced during 2026, remote working should develop on a hybrid model that avoids isolation, and maternity, paternity, parental, and bereavement leave must be strengthened, building on the paid miscarriage leave introduced in 2026. Mental health first aid responders should be established in every workplace.

Inclusive participation

Participation among women, older workers, and persons with disabilities remains below potential. Flexible working arrangements, affordable childcare, and equality-driven recruitment policies must be reinforced. The Union also insists that third-country nationals, who now sustain significant parts of the economy, be afforded equal

pay for equal work and full protection against exploitation, with vigorous enforcement against undeclared work and abusive temping practices.

Reform of the Immigration Appeals Process for Third-Country Nationals

The effective protection of third-country nationals also requires an immigration appeals system that is timely, transparent and consistent with the realities of employment and family life. Prolonged uncertainty harms workers, responsible employers and public administration alike. The GWU therefore calls for reform of the Immigration Appeals Board and the wider appeals process, supported by adequate staffing, clear procedures and published service standards. Legislation should establish a realistic maximum period for the determination of an appeal which, in no case, may exceed twelve months from the date on which a complete appeal is lodged. Applicants should receive timely notice of any missing information, and decisions should be reasoned and communicated without avoidable delay.

Where a valid appeal, or the irregularity giving rise to it, is not connected with criminal activity, fraud or serious public-security concerns, the third-country national should be permitted to remain lawfully employed while the appeal is pending. This protection should be subject to appropriate safeguards, including identity and security checks, compliance with tax and social-security obligations, verified employment and effective action against fraudulent claims. A time-limited document confirming the right to reside and work pending determination should be issued promptly and remain valid until a final decision is taken, so that administrative delay does not force a worker into destitution, undeclared work or exploitation.

Budget 2027 should also provide for a one-time regularisation mechanism for third-country nationals whose irregular situation arose principally from administrative or procedural failures rather than criminal conduct, fraud or deliberate abuse. Eligibility should be assessed individually against transparent criteria, including proof of identity, employment history, tax and social-security compliance, length of residence and absence of serious criminality. The measure should include a defined application window, coordination among Identità, Jobsplus and other competent authorities, and safeguards against employer exploitation. Its purpose would be to resolve a legacy caseload fairly, restore lawful employment and compliance, and allow the reformed system to begin from a clear and credible baseline.

Employment Justice and Industrial Tribunal Reform

A fair labour market requires an employment-justice system that is timely, accessible, enforceable and properly resourced. The February 2026 Proposed Framework for Industrial Tribunal Reform provides a sound basis for modernisation, but institutional reform will only succeed if the Industrial Tribunal, the Department for Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER) and the wider justice system are given the capacity required to deliver decisions within reasonable timeframes. Delays fall most heavily on dismissed workers without income, injured workers awaiting compensation and smaller employers dependent on timely resolution of disputes.

Making Industrial Tribunal reform work

Budget 2027 should provide a dedicated implementation package for the reformed Industrial Tribunal. Funding should be linked to published caseload data, including pending and incoming cases, disposal rates and case age, so that the number of chairpersons, members, registry officers and support staff is sufficient to make the

proposed one-year determination objective credible. A temporary transition and backlog fund should operate for two to three years, with additional panels and registry support, a dated backlog-clearance plan and quarterly public reporting on progress.

Appointments should be competitive, independent and supported by appropriate remuneration, tenure, pension treatment, training and administrative resources. While the reform framework favours a legally qualified Chairperson, the GWU maintains that eligibility should also be capable of recognising substantial industrial-relations expertise. DIER should receive a separate implementation and recurrent allocation for the transfer and management of Tribunal registry functions, including file migration, trained staff and public-facing services, without weakening its inspection, advisory and trade-dispute conciliation responsibilities.

The reformed system should be supported by simple and inclusive digital services, including standard forms, electronic filing, secure case tracking, document exchange and appropriate facilities for remote evidence. These services must complement, rather than replace, in-person and assisted-digital channels. Dedicated and accessible Tribunal premises should be secured in Valletta, with sufficient space for concurrent hearings, mediation and confidential consultation, together with the technology required for hybrid hearings and presentation of evidence.

Budget provision should also support voluntary, time-limited mediation through certified mediators, at no charge to the parties and clearly separate from DIER conciliation. Unresolved matters should return promptly to adjudication. A modest expert-evidence fund should be available for technically complex cases, including equal-pay analysis, while specialist tripartite capacity should be ring-fenced for urgent trade-dispute procedures. Tribunal performance information - including case inflow, clearance, age, hearing availability, time to decision, mediation duration and compliance with awards - should be published regularly at institutional level without interfering with adjudication in individual cases.

Making employment justice enforceable and accessible

A successful party should be able to proceed directly from an enforceable final Tribunal award to the appropriate execution measures without being required to commence further proceedings on the merits. The enforcement process should be rapid, inexpensive and supported by clear registry guidance. Budget 2027 should also establish an Access to Employment Justice Fund to support free employment-law advice and representation delivered by recognised trade unions and qualifying independent providers under transparent criteria, while safeguarding confidentiality and institutional independence.

Civil damages claims arising from workplace accidents and occupational disease should receive active judicial case management and priority listing once the claimant's medical condition is sufficiently stable for damages to be assessed. The enlarged Small Claims jurisdiction should likewise be matched by adequate adjudicators, registry staff and digital capacity, with its monetary ceiling reviewed periodically against inflation and evidence on access to justice.

Government should work towards an integrated digital gateway through which Industrial Tribunal proceedings, DIER conciliation and related employment procedures can be initiated and managed, with interoperability with existing electronic filing systems, including small claims. Non-digital access must remain available to ensure that technological modernisation does not create a new barrier to justice.

Equipping workers and representatives for new employment law

Legal reform must be accompanied by investment in the capacity of workers and their representatives to exercise new rights effectively. Budget 2027 should therefore fund training and technical support in pay transparency, job evaluation, work of equal value and pay-data analysis. It should also strengthen collective-bargaining capacity through negotiator training, sectoral wage research and access to reliable labour-market data, supporting Malta's obligations to promote and strengthen social-partner capacity for effective collective bargaining.

A dedicated outreach and representation programme should support platform workers with accessible information, employment-status advice and collective organisation as new rights on employment status, transparency and algorithmic management take effect. Funding should also be provided for expertise in artificial intelligence, data protection, algorithmic auditing, HR technology and employment law, together with accredited training and paid training leave for shop stewards and workplace representatives. These measures would ensure that legislative rights are capable of being understood, enforced and translated into practical protection at workplace level.

Social dialogue and a Chamber of Labour

The strength of Malta's labour market ultimately rests on the strength of its social dialogue. The Union renews its call for the ratification of further ILO conventions and for a complete overhaul of employment and industrial relations laws. In addition, the Union has proposed during 2026 the creation of a Chamber of Labour: a separate contribution system for non-unionised workers, channelled not to any union but to a body managed jointly by the trade unions and Government, to finance research and initiatives aimed at improving workers' conditions. Budget 2027 provides the appropriate vehicle to begin structuring this reform in consultation with all social partners.

5. Tourism, Maritime Work and Sustainable Development

Quality over quantity

Tourism has again delivered record arrivals and expenditure, but the strains it places on infrastructure, housing, and residents' quality of life have intensified in equal measure. The GWU restates its position that policy must decisively prioritise quality over quantity, continue to further promote off-season travel, and raise standards and wages across hospitality and entertainment, where earnings remain among the lowest in the economy.

Tourism Skills Passport and Seafarers' Charter

The Union is critical of the continued delay in implementing the Tourism Skills Passport, a proposal it has now advanced in successive pre-budget submissions. Budget 2027 should commit to its introduction with a defined timeline and budget line, alongside the Seafarers' Charter proposed by the Union to guarantee minimum standards of wages, conditions, accommodation, and social protection in the maritime sector.

6. Delivery, Accountability and Social Dialogue

Implementation principle Each adopted measure should carry a responsible

ministry or agency, a funded timetable, measurable outcomes and a structured role for the social partners in monitoring delivery.

7. Consolidated Recommendations and Action Framework

The following framework converts the Union's national priorities into clear areas for Government action. Detailed sector proposals are retained in Annex A.

Policy area	Budget 2027 action	Lead coordination
Purchasing power	Retain targeted price support; reform COLA; establish a Living Income benchmark; index tax bands appropriately.	Finance; Social Policy; MCESD
Fair work	Modernise WROs; strengthen premium pay and minimum standards; enforce equal pay and lawful employment.	Economy; DIER; social partners
Skills and AI	Fund learning accounts and apprenticeships; regulate workplace AI through consultation and transparency.	Education; Economy; DIER
Social resilience	Improve pensions and benefits; establish the National Social Fund; expand housing and mental-health investment; and establish a National Active Ageing and Employment Programme supporting participation, retraining, flexible work and age-friendly workplaces.	Social Policy; Economy; Jobsplus; Health; social partners
Mobility and regions	Improve public transport and strategic employment-area links; develop a National Shared Mobility Framework and assess a controlled, worker-focused first-/last-mile pilot; deliver Gozo connectivity and infrastructure priorities.	Transport; Gozo; local government
Sector standards	Implement skills cards, the Tourism Skills Passport and the Seafarers' Charter; strengthen inspections.	Economy; Tourism; Transport; OHSA
Accountability	Publish timelines, allocations and outcome indicators; review progress through social dialogue.	Office of the Prime Minister; Finance; MCESD
Immigration appeals	Set a statutory maximum determination period of twelve months; preserve lawful employment while	Home Affairs; Identità; Jobsplus; Immigration

	valid non-criminal appeals are pending; and establish a safeguarded one-time regularisation mechanism for administrative or procedural cases.	Appeals Board
Employment justice	Fund Industrial Tribunal reform and backlog clearance; resource DIER registry functions; simplify enforcement of final awards; improve access to employment justice; and build worker and representative capacity for new employment law.	Justice; DIER; Economy; social partners

Annex A — Sector-Specific Proposals

This annex preserves proposals arising from the experience of GWU sections and groups. Measures of national application are reflected in the main submission; the detail below is retained to guide design, costing and implementation. Where proposals require legal, fiscal, environmental or operational assessment, the GWU calls for that work to be undertaken with the relevant section and social partners.

A1. Disciplinary Forces

Increase in pensionable emoluments (2026 PL Electoral Manifesto)

In the last PL Electoral Manifesto (Int Malta), it was announced that employees of the Disciplinary Force who remain in service for four (4) additional years after reaching twenty-five (25) years of service totalling twenty-nine (29) years will have their pension increased by 29% (instead of the current 23%). We propose extending this incentive to those employees who continue to serve in a Disciplinary Force on a part-time basis after completing the equivalent of four (4) years of service, which is calculated at 8,320 hours of part-time service in a Disciplinary Force. In this case, their pension from the year of retirement should also be increased by 29%. For those employees who were already serving part-time as of October 1, 2023, their previously completed service should also be taken in consideration. We are also proposing that same employees who continue to serve more than 25 years of service, but less than 29 years of service shall receive the increase of pro-rata basis (Eg: 26 years of service = **6.5%** increase, 27 years of service = **13.5%** increase, 28 years of service = **21%** increase and 29 years of service = **29%** increase).

Additional sum - Tax free (2026 PL Electoral Manifesto)

If employees within Disciplined Forces continues to serve beyond the twenty-nine (29) years in the service, he shall be entitled to an additional sum equivalent to six (6) months' basic salary (Tax free) for each additional year of service, which additional period of service for the purposes of the said payment shall not exceed a maximum of six (6) years of service (instead of the current four (4) years of service).

Same employees shall be granted a gratuity on a pro rata basis if a full year or years of additional service have not been completed due to illness or if the officer has reached retirement age. Gratuities shall be payable on retirement of the officer or on completion of thirty-five (35) years of service (instead of the current thirty-three (33) years of service).

Third Pillar Pension Scheme

To incentivise the uptake to a third pillar pension and to strengthen the wellbeing of all public officers upon reaching retirement the Public Administration, employees who are enrolled in a Third Pillar Pension Scheme shall be entitled to a refund of €250 per annum. This provision shall not be limited for Public Service Officers but shall be extended to all Public Sector Employees within Public Entities, Public Authorities and Public Agency's and is over and above any other initiatives implemented by the Government of Malta."

Long Protection Insurance

We are frequently receiving justified complaints where our members in the Disciplinary Forces stationed in operational posts, whose work involves higher risk situations, are being obliged to pay significantly higher Long Protection Insurance premiums compared to other colleagues in the same force when they apply for a bank loan.

Therefore, we propose that these employees be granted a government reimbursement for the difference in premiums they are required to pay due to the nature of their work. This reimbursement should be provided to these employees within six (6) months of the succeeding year.

We urge the government to urgently address the situation where Discipline forces employees, particularly members of the Armed Forces who are deployed abroad in countries where the general population is advised to avoid all travel (such as Libya and Lebanon recently), are not covered by Long Protection Insurance related to their loans. This is a very disappointing considering that these officers are abroad on behalf of the government of Malta. This situation must be addressed with urgency. We propose that the government directly cover these employees to provide them and their families with peace of mind.

A2. Gozo

Connectivity and Maritime Infrastructure

Gozo currently relies on a single port at Mgarr, creating vulnerability and limiting economic growth. Strengthening connectivity must be the top priority for the 2027 Budget.

Expansion of Mgarr Port

Immediate issuance of tenders so that the long awaited project could commence as soon as possible. The expansion of the port should actively consider land reclamation if required. The project should also

plan to accommodate two additional Gozo Channel vessels as promised by Government. The Upgrading of the fast-ferry berthing areas should also be included so as to support increased operations.

Secondary Port Development

Gozo remains heavily dependent on Mgarr Harbour as its principal maritime gateway, leaving the island vulnerable when adverse weather disrupts or limits port operations. The GWU therefore proposes the **identification of a second strategic port location** to strengthen Gozo's connectivity and resilience.

Particular consideration should be given to the **long-proposed breakwater at Marsalforn**, which could provide a sheltered maritime facility while supporting the development of a small marina and safer berthing for fishing vessels. The project would also provide improved coastal protection for the promenade, businesses and surrounding infrastructure, while contributing to the regeneration and economic development of Marsalforn.

Multi-Use Port Considerations

The port must support:

Private marina operations.

Full-time and part-time fishermen.

Recreational boating.

Tourism operators (Comino trips, coastal tours, water sports).

2. Completion of Ongoing Projects

Priority should be given to the **timely completion of projects already underway before committing resources to new initiatives**. Particular attention should be given to completing **Ulysses Grove, the Gozo Museum, the Gozo Airstrip and the Ġordan Lighthouse Area**, ensuring that existing public investment delivers its intended economic, social and infrastructural benefits.

3. Road and Infrastructure Development

Priority should be given to the **completion of Marsalforn Road** and the full resurfacing of roads completed in recent years that remain with only one layer of tarmac. Immediate attention should then focus on critically deteriorated and heavily used roads, particularly **Triq it-Tigrija, Triq il-Qala and Triq San Blas**, followed by **Triq Tabib Anton Tabone, Triq Xuxa, Triq Kerċem and Triq tal-Ghajj**. Priority should be determined by road condition, traffic volume and importance to Gozo's transport network.

4. Incentive Schemes

4.1 Agriculture

Introduce targeted **financial support for farmers to invest in modern machinery and sustainable agricultural infrastructure**, including reservoirs, wells and cisterns for improved water management. Existing schemes for the **construction and restoration of traditional rubble walls** should also be strengthened to protect agricultural land, conserve natural resources and support Gozo's rural environment.

4.2 Fisheries

Introduce targeted **financial incentives for fishermen to maintain and upgrade their vessels and equipment**, supporting necessary investment to improve safety, efficiency and the long-term sustainability of Gozo's fishing sector.

4.3 Digital and Remote Work Sector

Introduce targeted **incentives to attract digital and online service companies to establish operations in Gozo**, creating quality employment and reducing dependence on commuting to Malta. This should be complemented by the **full activation of the Xewkija Innovation Hub**, maximising existing infrastructure to support innovation, entrepreneurship and new economic activity.

5. Cultural Heritage Preservation

Establish a **dedicated fund for the urgent restoration and protection of heritage sites at risk of permanent deterioration**, with priority given to **Kenuna Tower in Nadur and Qolla l-Bajda Battery in Marsalforn**. Public-private partnerships should also be considered where appropriate to accelerate restoration and ensure the long-term preservation of these important sites.

6. Transport and Mobility

6.1 Reducing Vehicle Congestion at Mġarr

While free public transport has increased usage, further measures are required to **reduce traffic congestion and improve mobility in Gozo**. These should include the introduction of **paid parking facilities in Mġarr** and the strengthening of **park-and-ride services**, with improved routes serving the eastern villages and key transport connections.

6.2 Proposed Park-and-Ride Stops

Strengthen **park-and-ride services connecting Mġarr with Gozo's eastern villages**, operating primarily during peak hours (**5:00am–8:00am and 2:00pm–8:00pm**). Strategic pick-up points should include **Nadur Square and Triq l-Imġarr; Qala Square and the Football Ground; the Barmil Area and Heliport in Xewkija; and the Remy Area and Triq Sant'Antnin in Ghajnsielem**, with routes limited to one or two stops per village to ensure an efficient and reliable service.

7. Clean and Green Energy Initiatives

Invest in **large-scale rooftop solar installations over major public parking areas and Government buildings**, including parking facilities in **Marsalforn, Victoria, Gozo General Hospital and Mġarr Terminal**, as well as suitable public buildings in Victoria. Such investment would **increase renewable energy generation while providing much-needed shade for parked vehicles** and making better use of existing public spaces.

A3. Construction and Cross-Sector Enforcement

Asbestos Scheme

The scheme to provide compensation for shipyard workers affected by asbestos-related illnesses is very commendable. We propose that this scheme be made ongoing and widened to include Shipyard, Army, Public Service and Sector, and Enemalta employees.

Insurance

Government should legislate to require employers in all sectors to provide insurance cover for their employees, ensuring that all workers are protected in case of accidents at the place of work, work-related illnesses, or other unforeseen events.

Construction and Planning issues

The construction sector is undeniably one of the country's largest employers, sustaining thousands of jobs both directly and indirectly. Yet, it is also one of the most

abusive industries, where exploitation and lawbreaking have become the norm rather than the exception. We cannot continue to tolerate a situation where architects knowingly apply for permits that violate civil laws, or where contractors act as though they are untouchable and above the law.

We demand that Government act decisively and legislate to protect citizens before contractors with deep pockets. Too many people find themselves in the absurd position of being in the right but still losing out, forced to surrender their rights and live in misery simply because they cannot match the financial and legal resources of powerful developers. This is not justice; it is abuse.

We also insist that competent authorities begin carrying out strict and unannounced inspections on construction sites. The ongoing exploitation of migrant workers forced to accept any condition because of their irregular status is nothing short of modern-day slavery. It must be eradicated immediately. We urge the Government to pass legislation requiring skill cards in the construction industry as soon as possible. No one should be permitted to access a construction site without a skill card, regardless of the project's scale. This measure will decrease the presence of unskilled workers in construction sites, consequently reducing accidents and stopping all exploitation of workers.

The construction sector must be cleaned up, once and for all, and the interests of citizens and workers must come before the profits of those who exploit the system.

Reintegration of Former Prisoners into Society

Reintegration is vital to reducing reoffending and ensuring that former prisoners become active, responsible members of society. Upon release, many face serious challenges, including unemployment, lack of housing, broken family ties, and social stigma.

To address this, we propose a structured reintegration framework that provides vocational training, education, psychological support, and mentorship. Partnerships with employers should be encouraged through incentives to offer ex-prisoners real job opportunities. Furthermore, community awareness campaigns must be introduced to reduce prejudice and foster inclusion. Reintegration is not only a matter of personal responsibility but also a collective social duty. By providing support systems and genuine opportunities, we can help individuals rebuild their lives while strengthening communities and promoting long-term social stability.

Traffic Management

Traffic management has become a critical challenge that affects residents, businesses, and daily commuters. Everyone acknowledges this problem, and there is growing recognition of the need for stronger coordination. At present, local councils independently issue permits for road closures without considering the wider impact on surrounding areas. This fragmented system often results in multiple roads being closed simultaneously, creating severe bottlenecks, congestion, and in some cases, entire areas being cordoned off by cranes.

We therefore propose the establishment of a central authority responsible for monitoring, coordinating, and issuing all road closure permits across the country. This agency would ensure proper planning, communication, and scheduling so that closures are staggered, emergency access is maintained, and alternative routes are clearly identified. A single, accountable body would eliminate duplication, improve

traffic flow, and create a more efficient system that serves both public and commercial interests. Furthermore, heavy fines should be imposed on individuals or entities that close roads without proper authorization, ensuring strict compliance and deterring abuse of the system.

Justice

Justice delayed is justice denied. We cannot continue to have court cases dragging on for years without a conclusion in sight. Such delays inflict financial and emotional hardship on plaintiffs, many of whom are forced to pay legal fees even when hearings are suspended at the last minute. This undermines faith in the justice system and erodes public trust. We propose that Government allocate all the necessary resources to ensure that cases are heard and concluded within a reasonable timeframe. At the same time, the Chief Justice should provide regular public updates on cases that have been pending for years, ensuring accountability and transparency within the judicial process.

Modernisation of the Work Regulation Orders (WROs)

The Government should accelerate the comprehensive modernisation of all Work Regulation Orders (WROs). Most of the WROs currently in force have seen little more than annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) updates and no longer reflect the realities of today's labour market.

Many of these regulations are outdated and continue to create unjustified differences in employment conditions between workers performing different occupations or working in different sectors. Such disparities are no longer justified in a modern economy.

We believe it is time for a thorough review to ensure that all employees are afforded fair and equitable minimum employment conditions. Every worker contributes equally through taxation and deserves equal treatment under employment law, regardless of the sector in which they are employed.

The modernisation of the WROs should therefore be given priority to eliminate outdated inequalities, strengthen workers' rights, and ensure that employment.

Protecting Workers from Extreme Heat

Legislation should be introduced requiring all non-essential outdoor work to stop during the hottest afternoon hours whenever temperatures reach a legally established limit.

Workers should not be expected to risk heat exhaustion, serious illness or even death simply to complete work that can be postponed or carried out at a safer time. The law should clearly define the temperature threshold, the hours during which work must stop, the sectors covered and the penalties for employers who fail to comply.

Trade unions across Europe are already calling for similar protection. Malta, with its increasingly intense summer temperatures, should take the lead and introduce effective heat legislation without further delay. Protecting workers from extreme heat is not a favour—it is a basic health and safety obligation.

A4. Technology, Electronics and Communications

These following proposals are intended to improve fairness, strengthen workers' purchasing power, support access to home ownership and promote labour market stability.

1. Fairer Access to First-Time Buyer Assistance

Background

Current rules may exclude individuals who inherited a share of their parents' home, even though they never owned an independent residence.

Proposal

Maintain eligibility where the inherited share was acquired through inheritance.

The applicant has never purchased another residential property.

The inherited share is not an independent dwelling and cannot reasonably be sold or used independently.

The purchased property will become the applicant's primary residence.

Justification

First-time buyer schemes should reflect a person's real housing situation. A small inherited share that provides neither housing security nor financial benefit should not prevent access to Government assistance.

Safeguards

Require notarial proof and recover benefits obtained through false declarations.

2. Tax Exemption on Voluntary Overtime

Background

Employees who voluntarily work beyond their contracted hours should retain the full value of their additional effort.

Proposal

Exempt genuine voluntary overtime from income tax.

Remove the current weekly wage eligibility limit.

Continue Social Security contributions to protect pension rights.

Justification

Tax-free voluntary overtime would increase take-home pay, reward additional effort, help employers address labour shortages and improve productivity without increasing labour costs.

Safeguards

Overtime must remain voluntary, separately recorded, comply with Working Time

Regulations and collective agreements, and normal wages must not be converted into overtime.

3. Reduced Work Permit Renewal Fees for Long-Term Foreign Workers

Background

Long-term foreign workers contribute to Malta's economy through taxes, social security and essential work.

Proposal

Introduce progressive reductions in work permit renewal fees based on years of continuous legal employment.

0–3 years: standard fee.

4–6 years: 25% reduction.

7–10 years: 50% reduction.

Over 10 years: 75% reduction or an administrative renewal fee.

Justification

Rewarding long-term contributors will improve retention, reduce turnover and strengthen Malta's competitiveness.

Safeguards

Apply only to workers with continuous legal employment who comply with immigration, tax and social security obligations.

A5. Chemical and Energy

Hal Far Industrial Estate and Worker Services

Hal Far Industrial estate has grown drastically in the last years. Every so often, you can see a new factory taking shape. This is very good for the Maltese economy, but it is causing a lot of issue to the workers. There is a committee who should be looking after the area, but nothing much is done.

Therefore, we request that in the next budget, Government forks out a budget to update this Industrial estate by:

Covered bus shelters and more set up around the area.

Since there is no efficient bus service, we propose an underground parking and all the new factories, should provide such parking for their employees.

A Park and Ride service from Paola, cars can park near the cemetery and a shuttle bus service is provided to Hal Far, this will mean less cars driving to Hal Far

It is very important, that there are road markings on the roads, especially where there is the entrance to Playmobil, rounding the corner to Trelleborg, round the corner to

Medichem, etc.

Factories work a 24/7 schedule therefore a health clinic should be set up to be used by the workers if they are feeling sick or God forbid, encountering an injury. Employees spend hours at the Paola clinic to be seen by a doctor when they are sent home sick from work.

Many employees have children and it is a headache for them having to work a 3-shift pattern and find it difficult where to leave them, therefore a childcare centre would be ideal, opening from 5.30am till 10.30pm to cover the day and afternoon shifts.

We also propose

Night shelters for people who end up alone.

Employees over 61 years of age, will have the option to work less hours without affecting their pension.

Employees who are single should be treated more fairly in relation to taxation, etc.

The grant of 4 years of social security for every birth should also be given to mothers who are still working

Social services: people should be made more aware of what they are entitled to and the customer care service should be more informed when an employee phones with a question.

Motorcycle licence- a person should not have to pay extra to get a driving licence for a motorbike with a stronger engine. Car drivers get 1 licence to drive a car with 12 hp, 15 hp, etc. It should be the same for motorcycles.

A6. Public Entities

Taxes

Tax on overtime to read at 10% or capping of overtime 15% taxation raised to 30K.

An incentive to decrease taxes for workers that do remote working.

An incentive for employers to promote remote working.

Social contributions for married couples, where they can have the option to combine their contributions. For example, a spouse who did not pay for two years and the other spouse paid more than required. The extra contribution can be added to the spouse that had missing years.

Income tax bands are to be substantially revised in line with inflation. The tax bands have remained unchanged for several years despite the unusually high inflation particularly in the last few years. This means that income tax has effectively increased in each of the subsequent years, eroding the spending power of citizens particularly the lower- and middle-income earners. Such a revision would be an effective way of supporting hard working families rather than receiving the ad hoc cheques. This measure may be revenue neutral if an additional band is added (example over 100,000 euros) and/or increasing the top rate. Such an approach would be a progressive move in keeping with the labour party's founding principles.

Environment

Measures to reduce noise and air pollution.

More enforcement of environment laws.

Environment protection, especially ODZ areas.

Improved enforcement on construction and property permits.

As a country we should focus on greener electrical production such as hydrogen.

Incentives to encourage and promote a greener economy

Better schemes to encourage the use of alternate transport such as bicycles and motorcycles.

Better, and secure roads where such means of transport can be used.

Incentives to encourage the industry to dispose of waste in a reasonable manner.

Enforcement of the law in favour of accessible coasts/beaches for the public and more beaches which permit the citizens to take their pets.

A national policy that is forward thinking and protects the environment since the environment is being threatened.

Construction must be better monitored since the dust being caused by it is causing several illnesses especially ones relating to breathing. Unfortunately, our country is experiencing many victims of breathing-related deaths.

More open spaces, more endemic trees, and less concrete including playgrounds.

Construction waste should be recycled since such stone can be reused.

Incentives for green roofs.

Ground water, which is not being used for agricultural purposes, is being abused and should stop immediately. Enforcement on the protection of ground water since such abuse is introducing more salt to the water table, destroying such resources. Citizens and companies extracting it illegally should be heavily fined.

Allocation of funds for improved enforcement to strike a balance between open spaces and spaces allocated for tables and chairs.

Allocation of funds to local councils for the purchase and planting of mature indigenous trees in all localities. This would create equality between localities since currently some localities have trees while others barely have any. Mature trees may be enjoyed by the current citizens because the country has destroyed several trees and greenery in a relatively short period.

Cost of Living, Salaries and Conditions of Work

Changes in the system so it reflects today's reality to have a tangible living income, in line with the GWU's research studies on The Maltese Living Income.

Increase in thresholds for those who are single parents, in work benefit, children's allowances, subsidize on loans. This is because single parents having a wage between 20k-25k do not earn enough money due to cost of living considering one is paying a loan or a rent.

After the COLA increase, prices must be checked to avoid abuse in the increase in prices.

Otherwise, the COLA increase would have been for nothing.

On Public Holidays, shift workers employees are compensated as per law. The proposal is for shift employees to be compensated of 11.5 hours regardless of whether they are working the day, night or off. Therefore, the compensation would read as follows:.

Day duty: flat rate + double (either payment or vacation leave added – 11.5 hours).

Off duty: vacation leave added (11.5 hours)

Night Duty: flat rate + double for hours worked (eg from 19:00 to 00:00 = 5 hours) + vacation leave added (6.5 hours added).

Public Transport

An efficient public transport so to decrease street traffic, where bus stops have shelter and a good circulation of air in the vehicles.

The introduction of monorail or transport to and from working areas in Malta.

Rule of Law

Better enforcement of laws to reduce corruption. Financial audits of taxes paid vis-à-vis asset possession. For example, citizens who declare they are earning minimum wage or unemployed or are making a loss. However, they are in possession of expensive cars and/or boats.

Better enforcement on social security frauds such as citizens who declare they are unemployed and/or single parents to be eligible of certain benefits. However, some single parents may be a relationship with the other parent, but they live in different premisses to keep earning the benefits. Some unemployed citizens may be renting garages and/or doing side work such as painting houses without declaring anything.

Court proceedings should be more efficient, so the number of bails due to slow proceedings may be reduced.

Food

Better rates for healthier food including fruits and vegetables

Improved support to local farmers and increase locations of farmer's markets.

Education

Education – the breakfast benefit, 3-16 club and summer school should become mandatory for all schools including private ones.

Introduction of physical activity and nutritional education in schools, which in turn will reduce obesity and other health risks related to lack of physical activity in our society.

Work life balance

Work permitting – more access to telework in all sectors

The introduction of flexibility (work permitting) where employers would stipulate a core time, then the rest may be flexible hours. For example, workers must work a total of forty (40) hours weekly, respecting the core hours (eg, 10:00-13:00) and then they work the rest of the hours throughout the

week.

A7. Youth

Education.

Strengthen Education on Workers' Rights and Trade Unionism.

Introduce structured modules on workers' rights, employment standards, and trade unionism within the national curriculum, ensuring consistent exposure from early schooling onwards.

Prioritise Soft Skills and Essential Life Competencies.

Encourage educational institutions to integrate subjects such as basic legal and financial literacy, communication, creativity, and cultural awareness into their curriculum. These skills are essential for preparing students for adulthood and ensuring equal opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Strengthen Vocational Education.

While welcoming the reopening of vocational schools, launch a national campaign to attract students with strong aptitude for manual and technical work. Expand course offerings and increase credit allocations to ensure high-quality vocational pathways.

Apprenticeship Bonuses.

Students receive a yearly completion bonus after successfully finishing an apprenticeship. This bonus encourages greater completion rates, lowering dropout rates, and encouraging more young people to enroll in vocational education, this reward would acknowledge students' dedication and hard work

Waiving Employment License Fees for Protected Students.

Waive the employment licence fee for TCN students granted international or national protection status and enrolled in courses at MCAST or other educational institutions with compulsory apprenticeships. This removes barriers to fair employment opportunities.

Extended Inclusive Education Unit (Mcast) Hours (this can be done to similar units not just Mcast).

Keep the IEU open until 7:00 p.m. for study support, assignments and one-to-one guidance. This will help by supporting students who have some limitations and are in need of extra academic assistance after school hours.

Student Study Centers.

Establish Government-funded study centres across Malta and Gozo that would be open to all post-secondary and tertiary students. In order to guarantee that every student has an accessible environment in which to study and succeed, these centres would offer free quiet study spaces and high-speed Wi-Fi. They would have extended opening hours during evenings, weekends, and exam periods.

Increase Hours of Apprenticeship.

Increase the number of apprenticeship hours available to students so they can gain more practical work experience prior to graduation. Expanding apprenticeships will benefit students by strengthening their practical skills, boosting confidence and employability, better meeting industry demands, and ensuring they are better equipped to make a smooth transition into full-time employment.

Health:.

Normalise Mental Health Awareness and Routine Check-ups.

Integrate mental health screenings and awareness initiatives into standard healthcare practices, treating mental wellbeing with the same importance as physical health.

Strengthen Awareness of Mental Health Services.

Launch national campaigns promoting available mental health services, including helplines and youth-focused support channels.

Improve Referral Pathways for Youth Mental Health Support.

Improve access to youth mental-health support by allowing students who feel uncomfortable seeking help through a GP to obtain referrals directly from qualified counsellors, ensuring timely and barrier-free access to professional services.

Social.

Enable Social Security Contributions from Age 16.

Allow young people to begin contributing to social security from the age of 16, supporting early financial independence and long-term stability.

Expand the Youth Volunteer Scheme.

Enhance the Youth Volunteer Scheme by increasing eligible hours, widening participation, and allowing working youths to benefit from stipends/leave for voluntary service.

Transport.

Direct Transport Links to Educational Institutions.

Introduce direct shuttle services from major park-and-ride hubs to MCAST and other large educational institutions during peak hours to reduce congestion and improve accessibility.

Park and Ride Facility in the South.

Create a Park and Ride facility in the south, like Zejtun, to accommodate travelers from nearby areas. This effort would promote increased use of public transportation, ease parking pressure in central Malta, lessen traffic congestion, and give locals and employees a more effective and sustainable mode of transportation.

Housing.

Increase the Property Value Threshold.

Increase the maximum property value under the 10% Deposit Scheme, as most properties currently available on the market exceed the €250,000 limit. Updating the threshold would allow more first-time buyers to qualify for the scheme and improve access to home ownership.

First Home Legal Expenses Grant.

Introduce a grant to help first-time buyers cover legal and administrative costs, such as notary, architect and bank fees. This would reduce the upfront financial burden and make buying a first home more affordable for young people.

A8. Pensioners

GWU Għaqda Pensjonanti:

The GWU Għaqda Pensjonanti would like to present the following proposals for the Government's Budget for Year 2026/27:

To increase the pensioners' income the GWU Għaqda Pensjonanti proposes that instead of the current 2/3 method, the pension should be calculated on 3/4 of the salary.

As from 2023, the Collective Agreements are no longer considered in the revision of pensions. This method has created an anomaly with the result that 2 workers in the same grade and salary but of different age, receive different pensions upon their retirement. The older worker receives 2/3 of his current wage while the second, who is younger, thus enjoying more Collective agreement increases, receives a higher pension. Increases which were given after the older worker retired. This is a discriminatory procedure which has to stop. The pay increases in the Collective Agreements have to remain considered in the revision of the pensions.

There are workers who work hard to invest in their pension. They interest themselves and seek promotions thus get high salaries and at the same time pay high Social Security contributions which eventually help earn a high pension. On the other hand there are other workers who interest themselves less and prefer to remain in a low grade to avoid certain responsibilities and pay lower contributions. These two kind of citizens are treated differently when as pensioners, need to settle in an elderly home. While both pay the same percentage of their pension to cover the expenses of the home, the higher earner pays a higher contribution because the same percentage on his pension results in a higher contribution. This is creating an unjust situation because we have citizens paying different amounts of money for the same service. So the Għaqda Pensjonanti proposes that the percentage paid by all pensioners should be calculated on the National Minimum Pension.

Għaqda Pensjonanti proposes that a free basic internet service is provided to all pensioners.

To fight loneliness amongst the elderly, the GWU Għaqda Pensjonanti proposes that in all Local Councils there should be a unit responsible to keep the contact numbers and call the elderly in their respective localities. With these contacts one is informed of the needs and conditions of the elderly. The elderly should be given the basic needs and help. By this we prevent situations where elderly people are abandoned and sometimes even die without even being noticed.

The Għaqda Pensjonanti urges the Government to introduce in the coming budget the measure included in the PL Electoral Manifesto aiming to increase more women eligible for the pension by inheriting extra Social Security Contributions paid by their spouses.

A9. Professional and Community Proposals

1. First-Time Buyer Property Grant for Mixed-Nationality Couples

Proposal

Extend first-time buyer grants and associated benefits to Maltese citizens purchasing property jointly with non-EU partners.

Key Measures

Introduce a full stamp duty exemption on the first €300,000 of a property's value, applicable to both purchasers rather than solely to the Maltese citizen.

Extend eligibility for existing first-time buyer incentives to mixed-nationality couples.

Ensure mixed-nationality couples are recognised within housing assistance schemes and support programmes.

Conditions

The couple must enter into a legally recognised marriage within a specified period following the property purchase.

Applications must be submitted within a defined timeframe following marriage.

The property must serve as the couple's primary residence.

Expected Benefits

Supports family formation among mixed-nationality couples.

Facilitates the integration of non-EU partners into Maltese society.

Promotes fairness and equality by recognising modern and diverse family structures.

Encourages investment in home ownership and long-term residential stability.

Reduces financial barriers for couples seeking to establish a family home in Malta.

2. Empty Property Activation Fund

Proposal

Establish a Government-funded scheme to renovate long-abandoned or vacant residential properties and return them to productive use within the housing market.

Mechanism

Government finances or co-finances renovation works on eligible vacant properties.

Property owners receiving assistance commit to renting renovated properties at affordable and regulated rates for a specified period.

Priority is given to properties that have remained vacant for extended periods.

Funding may be linked to energy-efficiency improvements and the restoration of heritage buildings where appropriate.

Expected Benefits

Increases housing supply without consuming additional land.

Revitalises urban and village cores.

Reduces property abandonment and urban decay.

Creates affordable housing opportunities, particularly for young families and first-time renters.

Preserves the architectural heritage and character of local communities.

Encourages the responsible use of existing property assets.

3. Residential Garage Rental Assistance Scheme

Proposal

Introduce a Government subsidy scheme to assist residents with the cost of renting garages in localities experiencing severe parking shortages.

Key Measures

Provide a partial subsidy on monthly garage rental costs for residents who do not own a garage.

Establish eligibility criteria based on household income, property ownership status, and locality.

Prioritise residents living in areas experiencing significant parking pressures.

Require subsidised garages to be used exclusively for vehicle parking.

Conduct regular reviews to ensure the scheme remains effective and appropriately targeted.

Expected Benefits

Reduces pressure on on-street parking.

Makes garage rentals more affordable for households unable to purchase a garage.

Reduces congestion caused by drivers searching for parking.

Improves residents' quality of life by reducing stress and inconvenience.

Encourages better utilisation of existing parking infrastructure.

Contributes to safer and less congested residential streets.

4. Mental Health Leave Policy

Proposal

Introduce legally protected paid mental health leave that is separate from existing sick

leave entitlements.

Key Measures

Provide employees with fifteen to one month paid mental health leave days annually upon certification of a professional.

Establish an independent review board or support mechanism through which employees can seek assistance in cases of burnout, excessive workplace stress, or unresolved mental health concerns.

Develop clear guidelines governing the use and administration of mental health leave.

Promote workplace mental health awareness, prevention programmes, and early intervention strategies.

Expected Benefits

Improves employee well-being and mental health.

Reduces burnout and long-term absenteeism.

Encourages healthier and more productive workplace environments.

Supports early intervention before conditions become more serious.

Provides employees with a fair and structured avenue for support when workplace disputes arise.

5. Subsidy Scheme for Healthy and Special Dietary Food Products

Proposal

Introduce targeted financial assistance for individuals who require specialised dietary products due to medically diagnosed health conditions, while promoting the affordability of healthy food choices for the wider population.

Key Measures

Subsidise approved healthy and specialised dietary products through tax reductions or direct support measures.

Provide financial assistance for individuals diagnosed with food allergies, intolerances, and medical conditions requiring specific diets.

Implement a voucher, reimbursement, or tax-credit system for eligible beneficiaries.

Collaborate with retailers, importers, and suppliers to improve affordability and accessibility.

Expected Benefits

Reduces the financial burden associated with medically required diets.

Promotes equity by supporting essential health-related needs.

Improves quality of life for affected individuals and families.

Encourages healthier eating habits among the wider population.

Helps prevent diet-related health complications.

Enhances access to nutritious food choices.

6. Survivor Pension Enhancement for Working Couples

Proposal

Strengthen survivor pension rights by allowing widows and widowers to receive a survivor's pension in addition to their own retirement pension where both spouses contributed to the social security system.

Key Measures

Permit surviving spouses to receive a proportion of their deceased spouse's pension entitlement while retaining their own pension.

Recognise the lifelong contributions made by both spouses.

Establish fair eligibility criteria linked to contribution records and duration of marriage.

Simplify application procedures for surviving spouses.

Expected Benefits

Reduces financial hardship following the loss of a spouse.

Recognises the dual contribution of working couples.

Improves financial security and independence among older persons.

Helps maintain living standards during retirement.

Reduces the risk of poverty and social exclusion.

7. Public Transport Capacity and Service Improvement Initiative

Proposal

Further strengthen Malta's public transport system through increased capacity, improved reliability, and enhanced passenger comfort, making public transport a more attractive alternative to private car use.

Key Measures

Expand public transport fleet capacity, particularly during peak hours.

Increase service frequency on high-demand routes.

Introduce additional express services linking residential areas and neighbouring towns with key employment and educational centres.

Improve monitoring systems to ensure timetable adherence and minimise delays.

Enhance passenger comfort through improved ventilation, seating, and overcrowding management.

Utilise data-driven planning to respond effectively to changing demand.

Upgrade bus stops by providing better shelter and protection from adverse weather conditions.

Expected Benefits

Improves commuter comfort and travel experience.

Reduces overcrowding.

Encourages greater public transport usage.

Contributes to lower traffic congestion and emissions.

Enhances punctuality and reliability.

Supports national sustainability and mobility objectives.

8. Single Parent Adult Dependent Support Scheme

Proposal

Introduce targeted financial assistance and tax relief measures for separated, divorced, widowed, and single-parent households supporting adult children who remain financially dependent due to rising housing and living costs.

Key Measures

Introduce additional tax deductions or tax credits for parents supporting adult children over the age of 21 residing in the family home.

Provide means-tested assistance for households carrying the majority of family expenses.

Recognise adult children pursuing home ownership, marriage, tertiary education, or vocational training as eligible dependants under defined conditions.

Establish income thresholds to ensure support reaches those most in need.

Review eligibility criteria regularly to reflect housing market conditions and the cost of living.

Expected Benefits

Provides financial relief to single-parent households.

Reflects changing social and economic realities affecting young adults.

Supports family stability and cohesion.

Assists young adults in preparing for independent living.

Reduces financial pressure on parents supporting their children.

Promotes intergenerational solidarity.

9. Fair Tax Relief Measures for Single Taxpayers

Background

Over recent years, various fiscal measures have been introduced to support specific household types, including married couples, parents, and families with dependent children. While these measures provide important social support, many taxpayers who fall under the single tax bracket have not directly benefited from family-related allowances, childcare incentives, education subsidies, and other support schemes linked to marital or parental status.

This group includes

Individuals who have never had children.

Single adults who live independently and bear all living expenses alone.

Widowed or divorced persons without dependent children.

Parents whose children are now adults, employed, and no longer qualify as dependants.

Individuals who continue to contribute significantly through income tax and national insurance contributions despite no longer benefiting from family-related support schemes.

Proposal

Introduce a Single Taxpayer Relief Scheme aimed at ensuring greater equity in the tax system by providing targeted relief to individuals who fall under the single tax bracket.

Proposed Measures

Increase the tax-free threshold for single taxpayers.

Introduce an annual tax credit for individuals who do not benefit from dependent-child or family-related tax deductions.

Provide a cost-of-living tax rebate for single-income households.

Review personal tax bands to narrow the disparity between tax treatment afforded to single and family tax statuses.

Introduce a "Lifetime Contributor Recognition Credit" for taxpayers who have contributed over a specified number of years without claiming family-related benefits.

10. Active Wellness Scheme for Persons Aged 50 and Over

Proposal

Introduce an Active Wellness Scheme aimed at promoting healthy ageing and

encouraging regular physical activity among adults aged 50 years and over.

Background

As individuals grow older, they may experience changes that can affect their physical and mental well-being, including reduced muscle mass, decreased bone density, fatigue, weight gain, sleep disturbances, anxiety, and an increased risk of chronic illness. Regular physical activity is one of the most effective ways of maintaining long-term health, mobility, and overall quality of life.

Key Measures

Provide an annual fitness voucher or wellness subsidy.

Support participation in gym memberships and structured exercise programmes.

Encourage activities such as swimming, walking groups, yoga, pilates, strength training, and other approved physical activities.

Offer educational sessions covering nutrition, bone health, menopause awareness, healthy ageing, and general wellness.

Proposed Financial Support

Annual wellness grant of between €250 and €400 per eligible individual.

Redemption through registered gyms, fitness centres, sports clubs, swimming facilities, and approved wellness providers.

Administration through a voucher or reimbursement system.

Expected Benefits

Promotes healthy ageing and active lifestyles.

Improves physical and mental health outcomes.

Reduces the prevalence of lifestyle-related illnesses.

Enhances social participation and community engagement.

Contributes to lower long-term healthcare expenditure.

A10. Maritime, Aviation and Transport

Transport

1. Promotion of Alternative Transportation Infrastructure

Develop safer infrastructure for alternative modes of transport by introducing dedicated lanes, safe passageways, and parking facilities for electric scooters (both privately owned and rented), motorcycles, and e-bikes. This investment in this infrastructure will encourage a shift away from private car use while ensuring that alternative transport remains safe and accessible.

2. Revival of Shared Mobility Services

Revive and promote the sustainable operation of carpooling, car-sharing, and electric vehicle rental schemes, many of which have unfortunately ceased operating in recent years. These services should be supported through partnerships with private car parks, providing dedicated off-road parking spaces free of charge. Such measures would reduce dependence on privately owned vehicles.

3. Shared Mobility and First-/Last-Mile Connectivity

Malta's transport challenges require solutions that extend beyond increasing road capacity. Limited land availability, pressure on parking and weak connections between transport hubs and workplaces justify a structured assessment of shared, low-emission mobility as a complement to public transport.

The GWU proposes that Government develop a National Shared Mobility Framework and undertake a feasibility assessment, in consultation with the social partners, Transport Malta, local councils and relevant stakeholders. The assessment should identify employment corridors and locations where shared mobility could improve connections between homes, bus stops, ferry terminals, park-and-ride facilities, workplaces, industrial estates and educational institutions.

Subject to that assessment, Budget 2027 should provide for a controlled pilot in selected employment and transport zones, with particular attention to shift workers and areas affected by parking pressure or inadequate first- and last-mile links. The objective must be to improve access to employment and reduce commuting time and cost, without replacing or weakening public transport.

The pilot should operate within a clear regulatory framework covering designated parking, geofencing where appropriate, user and driving-licence verification, insurance, vehicle maintenance, safety requirements and effective enforcement against obstruction or irresponsible parking. Participation by operators should be governed by transparent and non-discriminatory criteria, without endorsement of any particular commercial provider.

Independent evaluation should measure worker usage, affordability, safety, first- and last-mile connectivity, parking efficiency, integration with public transport and, critically, the number of private-car journeys replaced. Expansion should proceed only where evidence demonstrates measurable improvements in worker connectivity and a genuine reduction in private-car use.

4. Introduction of Collective Transportation for Employees and Students

Develop collective transport solutions for employees working within the same geographical areas through incentives for employers or in collaboration with the relevant authorities. This would significantly reduce congestion in major employment hubs, such as Mater Dei Hospital, where large numbers of shift workers begin and end work simultaneously.

In addition, enhance direct transport options from park-and-ride facilities to MCAST and other major educational institutions during peak hours through dedicated shuttle services. This would reduce private car use and ease traffic congestion.

5. Incentivising Free School Transportation

School-related traffic is one of the principal contributors to congestion in Malta. Government should actively encourage greater use of the existing free school transport service through awareness campaigns and incentives.

Tax incentives could be offered to parents whose children consistently make use of school transport. This initiative should also be extended to employees working within the same schools, allowing them to benefit from the service where feasible.

6. Strengthening the Y Plate (Passenger Transport) Sector

The Y Plate (light passenger transport) sector is only beginning to be effectively regulated, and considerably more can be done to improve employment conditions while maximising its contribution to Malta's transport system. Rather than viewing this sector as an additional burden on Malta's roads, it should be recognised as an important alternative to private car ownership for both locals and foreign residents.

Government should evaluate incentives that encourage greater use of these services, such as subsidising the first trip of the day or a fixed number of journeys during a given period. Such measures could gradually reduce dependence on private vehicles.

A further study should also examine users who make multiple stops using Y Plate services to determine whether additional incentives or pricing structures could further encourage uptake.

At the same time, employment conditions within the sector should be strengthened through improved regulation, ensuring fair working conditions, greater legal certainty, and effective enforcement of employment rights.

7. Incentives Following the Motorcycle Scheme

The New Petrol-Powered Motorcycle Scheme proved to be one of the Government's most successful transport incentives. Building on its success, Government should introduce a complementary incentive rewarding beneficiaries who significantly reduce the use of their private car.

A mileage threshold could be established whereby owners whose private vehicles remain below a specified annual mileage would receive a partial reimbursement of their annual vehicle licence fee following VRT verification. This retrospective incentive would encourage continued reliance on motorcycles instead of reverting to private car use.

8. Review of "Public Transport (Conditions of Work) Regulation Order, 2026"

Certain Wage Regulation Orders, including those applicable to bus drivers, currently require employees to exceed 48 hours of work per week before qualifying for overtime rates. Given the essential role that bus drivers play in Malta's public transport system, this threshold should be reviewed.

Government should align their standard working hours with those applicable to other

employees, ensuring that overtime rates become payable after 40 hours of work per week. This would promote fair treatment, improve working conditions, and help attract and retain workers within this essential sector.

Furthermore, employees covered by this WRO are among the very few categories of employees who do not qualify for double pay for all hours worked on Sundays and customary holidays. This disparity should also be addressed and amended accordingly to ensure that employees working on Sundays and customary holidays receive appropriate compensation for work performed during these periods, in line with the standards applicable to employees in other sectors.

Maritime.

9. Labour Law Coverage for the Fisheries Sector

End the exclusion of the fisheries industry from Maltese labour legislation, ensuring that workers in this sector enjoy the same rights and protections afforded to employees in other industries.

Strengthen enforcement by increasing inspections within the fisheries sector. While third-country nationals are often the victims of exploitation, they are frequently the ones penalised when irregularities are identified. Enforcement should instead focus on employers and operators who profit from such exploitation.

10. Inclusion of All Seafarers in Labour Migration Policy

Ensure that all seafarers are fully included within Malta's labour migration framework, guaranteeing fair treatment, appropriate legal protection, and proper regulation of their employment conditions.

10. Strengthening the Protection and Regulation of Seafarers in Malta

Malta's position as a major maritime hub makes it essential that all seafarers benefit from adequate legal protection. Regulatory gaps currently expose many workers to poor employment and living conditions, particularly those admitted under "Okay to Board" arrangements while working within Maltese territorial waters.

A comprehensive Seafarers' Charter should therefore be introduced in collaboration with Transport Malta, Identità, Jobsplus, DIER, the Malta Police Force, the Fisheries Department, social services, trade unions, and other relevant stakeholders.

The Charter should include

Minimum standards for wages, working conditions, accommodation, occupational health and safety, and social protection, based on best practices from countries such as the United Kingdom and France.

Clear accommodation standards both onboard vessels and ashore.

Mandatory submission and verification of employment contracts before entry into Malta.

Stronger border controls to ensure only seafarers with compliant contracts are admitted.

Stronger enforcement targeting exploitative employers rather than vulnerable workers.

11. Migration Status of "Okay to Board" Seafarers

Workers admitted under "Okay to Board" arrangements often end up performing onshore work that falls outside existing employment regulations. This creates significant legal gaps and leaves many vulnerable to exploitation.

In some cases, operators use this route to bypass the proper employment procedures applicable to third-country nationals. Furthermore, vessels are sometimes certified as meeting accommodation requirements despite lacking basic facilities, forcing seafarers to seek accommodation ashore.

Government should strengthen vessel certification procedures by ensuring that accommodation standards are physically verified before certification is granted.

Education.

12. Education on Workers' Rights and Trade Unionism

Introduce workers' rights, employment law, and trade union education within the national curriculum so that students understand their workplace rights and responsibilities before entering employment.

13. Greater Emphasis on Soft Skills and Life Skills

Schools should place greater emphasis on developing soft skills and practical life skills, including legal literacy, financial literacy, communication, creativity, and critical thinking.

Basic first aid and health and safety training should also become accredited components of the education system.

14. Strengthening Trade Schools and Technical Careers

Launch a national campaign promoting vocational education and technical careers, ensuring that students with strong practical abilities receive equal recognition and opportunities to develop their talents.

15. Waiving Employment Licence Fees for Protected Students

Waive employment licence fees for third-country national students granted international or national protection who are enrolled in courses at MCAST or other educational institutions requiring compulsory apprenticeships. This would remove unnecessary barriers to employment.

Health and Healthy Lifestyle.

16. Promoting Mental Health and Healthy Living

Normalise mental health awareness by introducing routine mental health check-ups alongside other regular health screenings. Early identification and intervention can significantly improve long-term wellbeing.

Malta continues to experience one of the highest obesity rates in Europe. Government

should therefore introduce legislation requiring restaurants and food establishments to display nutritional information, including calories and macronutrients (fat, carbohydrates and protein), as well as sugar and salt content, on their standard menus. This would enable consumers to make more informed dietary choices and encourage healthier eating habits.

Social.

17. Social Security Contributions for 16 and 17-Year-Old Workers

Introduce social security contributions for young people entering employment at the age of 16 and 17. This would encourage financial responsibility and earlier integration into Malta's social protection system.

18. Ban on Unpaid Internships and Traineeships

Malta should position itself as a leader within the European Union by prohibiting unpaid internships and traineeships. A structured apprenticeship remuneration framework should be introduced to ensure that young people receive fair compensation while gaining valuable workplace experience.

A11. Hospitality and Food Section

1. Health — Strengthening Health and Social Care

In support of the national GWU priorities on health, mental-health services and occupational safety, the Hospitality and Food Section calls for increased investment in palliative and mental-health care; substantially expanded hospital emergency capacity, including consideration of a new or expanded emergency centre; and stronger workplace prevention, enforcement and occupational health and safety structures.

The Section additionally proposes financial assistance and/or special leave for immediate family members caring for relatives with cancer or other serious illnesses, together with greater support for elderly persons who remain at home and employ carers rather than enter residential care.

2. Energy Resilience and Climate Adaptation

Alongside the national commitment for energy security, the Hospitality and Food Section proposes accelerated investment in renewable energy and supporting infrastructure, particularly to strengthen resilience during peak summer demand.

The Section also calls for a comprehensive national climate-adaptation strategy addressing rising summer temperatures and their effects on workers, communities, infrastructure and public health.

3. Education, Skills and the Maltese Language

In support of the national skills agenda, the Hospitality and Food Section proposes increased investment in education, vocational training and skilled trades, with targeted initiatives encouraging young people into occupations experiencing shortages.

As a distinct cultural and educational measure, the Section calls for modern initiatives and structures to safeguard and promote the Maltese language, particularly among younger generations.

4. National and Family Policy

The Hospitality and Food Section proposes a long-term strategy supporting the sustainable renewal of Malta's population, with stronger measures for families who dedicate time to raising and caring for young children.

It further calls for continued modernisation and simplification of public services, reduced bureaucracy, improved efficiency and shorter waiting times for citizens and businesses.

5. Transport — Reducing Congestion and Improving Mobility

Building on the national GWU position for sustainable mobility and stronger public transport, the Hospitality and Food Section calls for additional routes and fleet capacity to reduce waiting times, particularly at Valletta and park-and-ride hubs.

Its specific contribution is a national traffic-management strategy coordinating private vehicles, commercial deliveries and waste collection during peak periods, particularly 7:00am–10:00am and 3:00pm–6:00pm; operationally feasible remote work for up to three days weekly; and consideration of underground parking near village cores.

6. Heritage, Arts and Culture

The Hospitality and Food Section proposes increased investment in restoring and preserving historic buildings, backed by stronger enforcement against unnecessary demolition of buildings of architectural or cultural value.

It proposes support for volunteering through a phased entitlement of up to four additional leave days over four years, or appropriate tax incentives; greater assistance for families investing in children's participation in arts and culture; and the productive community reuse of abandoned buildings in village cores.

The Section also calls for better coordination and effectiveness of public cultural expenditure; stronger cultural and religious tourism; further film-industry investment, including specialised education and training for young people; and continued upgrading of public and tourist areas, with safer, more pedestrian-friendly village cores.

7. Harbour Area Regeneration

The Hospitality and Food Section proposes a comprehensive regeneration strategy for Malta's harbour communities that addresses physical infrastructure, demographic decline and the loss of community, cultural and social identity.

Targeted financial incentives should encourage young people and families to reside in harbour communities, supporting balanced populations and the regeneration of these historic areas.

8. Valletta — Safeguarding the Capital City's Identity

The Hospitality and Food Section calls for a long-term strategy protecting Valletta's residential, historical and cultural identity while maintaining its economic and cultural vitality.

It proposes that the Valletta Cultural Agency's role extend beyond events to sustainable regeneration and structured cooperation with residents, community organisations and existing Valletta associations, complementing rather than competing with their activities.

9. Third-Country Nationals — Work and Residence Permits

Complementing the national GWU proposal on immigration appeals and lawful employment, the Hospitality and Food Section calls for modernisation of the work and residence permit system so that applications and renewals are processed efficiently and within reasonable timeframes.

Administrative delay or system shortcomings should not cause people who are legitimately working and residing in Malta to fall inadvertently into irregular status. The Section seeks greater efficiency, certainty and protection for workers and responsible employers.

Conclusion

Budget 2027 can mark a decisive transition from growth measured mainly by volume to progress measured by value, fairness and quality of life. Malta has the means to protect purchasing power, reward work, strengthen pensions and services, invest in skills and infrastructure, and ensure that technological and environmental change benefits the many.

The General Workers' Union calls on Government to adopt a clear programme of funded measures, implementation deadlines and public accountability. Lasting reform will require genuine social dialogue: workers and their representatives must participate not only in consultation, but also in the design, delivery and evaluation of the policies that shape their lives.

The GWU stands ready to work with Government, employers and civil society to make Malta's prosperity more inclusive, resilient and just.