

Update

ISSUE 789
26 MARCH 2024



From left to right: Mr Kevin J. Borg (Consultant), Ms Joanne Bondin (President), Mr Joseph Farrugia (Director General), and Mr Stephen L. Muscat (Hon Treasurer).

MEA's 59th Annual General Meeting

The Malta Employers' Association held its 59th Annual General Meeting on 21st March. Below is the full Director General's report presented by Mr Joseph Farrugia.

Director General's Annual Report

The past year has been an exciting one for the Malta Employers' Association, as our offices were continuously engaged in a wide range of activities – courses, webinars, conferences and seminars, media events, and, most important of all, our regular interaction with our members. We were also busy with the EU funded project – Managing Change in a Post-Covid environment, and the [manual](#) that was launched prior to this AGM today is the end product of this project. The project was very successful and MEA will be taking the initiative to apply for other EU funded projects in the near future.

In anticipation of an increase in activities, MEA has been enhancing its human resources over the past year. I welcome Ms. Kirsten Cutajar Miller who has

The MEA Secretariat:

Director General
Joseph Farrugia

Consultant
Kevin J Borg

Consultant
Kirsten Cutajar Miller

Lawyer
Dr Charlotte Camilleri

SME Helpdesk Executive
Anton Vella

EU Projects Coordinator
Kurt Cortis

Office Administrator
Dorianne Azzopardi Cilia

Receptionist
Graziella Gauci

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From left to right: Mr Joseph Farrugia (MEA Director General) and Mr Stephen L Muscat (Hon Treasurer).

joined the secretariat as a consultant in economic affairs on a part time basis. Ms. Cutajar Miller is a well accomplished economist and she has been contributing to our research activities and position statements. Another addition to our ranks is Mr. Kurt Cortis, whose expertise in EU projects will certainly be of benefit to the Association, and that our members will certainly benefit from increased activity in this area. This boost in activity has highlighted the need for additional support in our administration. Introducing Ms. Graziella Gauci, who is assisting Ms. Dorianne Azzopardi Cilia in managing the increased workload at our administration/reception desk. Mr. Kevin J. Borg has been instrumental in enabling this restructuring exercise.

The capacity building drive is backed and coordinated with extensive discussions by council. Numerous meetings were held to assess the current situation of MEA against the backdrop of its sixty-year history, and to project where it is heading in the years to come. A number of strategic meetings were held and currently there are three committees focused on Marketing and Branding, Membership and IT who are designing a holistic operational strategy for MEA. In parallel, council and secretariat have also been meeting, under the guidance of Mr. Konrad Cassar Naudi, to conduct an exercise whereby the Association defines its Mission, Vision and Values. This exercise has been completed, and I am proud to report the outcome at this AGM:

Mission Statement

- We uphold the interests of responsible employers in fostering healthy employment relations and practices. We drive social dialogue and policy for a sustainable and dynamic economy.

Vision Statement

- To be the leading strategic partner for employers and policy makers, and a catalyst for innovative employment best practice.

Values Statement

- Dynamic – agile, adaptable and forward-looking leadership
- Integrity – upholding and promoting good governance, correctness and ethical employment practices
- Stakeholder centric – organisations and the people within them are our core focus
- Collaborative – building and nurturing healthy relationships, promoting members' and national interest
- Objective – guided by an evidence based, consistent and balanced approach
- Reliable – trustworthy, dependable and professional

The above statements have been painstakingly discussed by council members and secretariat. The meetings were clearly guided by a strong sense of enthusiasm and commitment to the future of the Association. I am confident that these consolidated statements truly define what the Association stands for, and also set the foundations for MEA to make further progress in the years to come. I must mention the tremendous contribution

to these sessions given by Ing. Michael Mifsud, who sadly passed away recently. He was a valued, long standing council member, and a friend to all of us.



The past year was packed with constant activity by the secretariat, and a full list of these events is attached to this report. In response to members' requests, we organised outreach activities whereby members could book one to one meetings with Jobs Plus, identity Malta and the Commission for Inland Revenue. These activities were all fully subscribed.

Our courses, which were mostly shifted to online participation, also in response to members' needs, were also well attended. In particular, the Employment Law Course Part 2 was well received by participants, mostly thanks to the input and dedication of Dr. Charlotte Camilleri.

We have gained very good media exposure through our television programme [MEATV](#), which has now been running for more than ten years, and also through our presence in radio and television programmes to which we are regularly invited, and media releases of which 18 were issued during 2023. It also pleases me to report that the [MEAINDEX](#), coordinated by Mr. Anton Vella, has picked up admirably and has become an important reference point for many companies. Recent analytics reveal that an average of 100 people a day visit the MEAINDEX, and more than 150k users have consulted it over the years.

At this stage, it is worth reminding members of the services offered by the Association. Besides the day-to-day advice on legal and management employment matters, we also assist in collective bargaining and represent companies on the Industrial Tribunal. The Human Resources Handbook is also a valuable tool which assists companies in their practice of human resource management, including, and perhaps especially those who due to their size may not have a human resources department. The [handbook](#) has forty chapters with hundreds of FAQs at the touch of your finger. Use it!

The services mentioned are geared towards individual companies. Yet one cannot undervalue the constant involvement of the Association in addressing issues that affect employers collectively, both at national and international level. In May last year, we organised a well-attended information session that laid down the entire process of employing Third Country Nationals. This was done with Identita' following an initiative taken by MEA whereby we set out to create a flow chart that explains the whole process. The success of the flow chart led to a repetition of the information session to Gozitan employers. We organised webinars on Voluntary Occupational Retirement Schemes, Zero Hour contracts, the Recovery and Resilience Plan, the New Employment Agencies Regulations, and more recently about Apprenticeship schemes. All these activities were held in conjunction with other stakeholders, amongst them Identita', MCAST, DIER and others.

These activities are often the result of extensive lobbying activities that we hold to safeguard employers' interests whenever there are any developments that will affect them. Hence our ongoing visits to the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, various Ministers, Heads of Government entities, and the Ombudsman. In international fora, our participation at the International Organisation of Employers and at the United Nations ILO conference are an indispensable means of gaining a global perspective on the world of work and gaining insights about what may be on the horizon in this field. Within the EU, our involvement in SGI Europe is critical in being your voice on emerging employment matters. A recent example is the transposition of the Minimum Wage Directive, which is a major issue for employers, whether unionised or not, as has just been explained by our President. Our senior vice-president, Ms. Doris Sammut Bonnici, represents Maltese employer bodies on

the European Economic and Social Affairs Committee. These activities are all time consuming and involve the input of the secretariat, and also of council members.

We also engage with our members on a sectoral basis. During the past twelve months, we have organised separate focus groups with the Professional Services, Wholesale and Retail, Logistics and Hospitality sectors as part of the EU project and the SME week conference held last November entitled 'Foreign Workers in the logistics Industry – Addressing HR Challenges'. We have also met with companies in the gaming sector, and recently the Association of Catering Establishments to explore areas of collaboration.

Our statements and positions are backed, as far as possible, by research activities. These research exercises often involve the input of our members whenever you are asked to fill in questionnaires. I strongly urge you to participate in these exercises, as it will provide us with the necessary data on which we can take informed decisions. In addition, strong participation gives strength and credibility to our arguments when we lobby in your behalf. A case in point was the press conference held last July to publicise the findings of the Wage Inflation Survey. We shall shortly be conducting a membership satisfaction survey, to which we strongly urge you to participate.

The public profile of the Association gained a boost when we organised the Conference about Malta's Low Birth Rate which was held in Parliament last July. Such activities serve to demonstrate that employers are not just concerned with immediate issues that may affect their business prospects, but are also sensitive to wider topics of national importance. Rarely, if ever, has there been an activity with such a wide participation of stakeholders.

We appreciate our members' involvement in the running of the Association. Communication is key, not just through the newsletters and communications that we constantly issue, but also by having you alerting us about any matters that affect you. The secretariat is always available to meet you.

In conclusion, this report and accompanying documents ascertain that the Malta Employers' Association has continued on a steady path of growth, with increased revenues generated by a growing membership, as we have not raised our subscriptions in 25 years. New members are approaching the Association mostly through positive word of mouth, which for us is the best advert. This does not mean that we can rest on our laurels. Rather, as we approach the Association's 60th anniversary, we have the energy and resolve to take MEA to new heights. I am convinced that the strategic exercise, combined with the fantastic contribution of the presidency and council – notably our president Ms. Joanne Bondin - and an enhanced and motivated secretariat, we will get there.