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## Media Release

### **MEA proposes 13 solutions to address skill shortages after extensive stakeholder consultation**

The Malta Employers Association has put forward thirteen concrete solutions to address the current skills shortages affecting Maltese industry.

MEA President Joanne Bondin explained how “we are currently experiencing a lack of human resources across the board. It is a constant challenge for employers to find employees with the right skills and qualifications to the extent that it is raising concerns about business continuity and competitiveness. To overcome this serious predicament, we need to focus on becoming more efficient and innovative in our business models and operations whilst addressing the social and economic needs of our country”.

MEA Director-General Joseph Farrugia opened the Forum, arguing that “while lack of skills is a global challenge, there are specific issues for Malta, including a low birth rate and a high percentage of young people opting or willing to leave for good. We need to design incentives to retain labour, while at the same time having a clear economic direction for the country. We are here to channel our recommendations towards a sustained growth based on skills, innovation and economic transformation”.

In a recent survey conducted by the MEA, 53% of respondents claimed that the current situation was exerting a significant impact on their business including serious disruption on their operations and stretched out resources. A further 12% responded that the impact on their business was “severe” to the extent that business continuity was severely at risk. Workers’ new priorities in favour of flexible work arrangements, particularly post-pandemic further exacerbate the challenge ahead for employers.

The MEA’s 13 recommendations emerged from extensive research, focus groups and consultation with a wide array of economic stakeholders, including industry leaders, entrepreneurs and officials from government authorities and agencies. Today’s SME National Forum 2022 entitled Ensuring the Skills for Future Competitiveness, served to debate the recommendations with a view to strengthening the MEA’s call for action. These include a call for capitalising on digital skills, investing in training and mentorship, a better connection between academia and industry, the prioritisation of risk assessment and the strengthening of good governance among others.

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Many stakeholders addressing the Forum highlighted the 13 recommendations put forward by the MEA and called on the authorities to implement the recommendations as soon as practically possible to ensure the smooth functioning of the labour market now and in the years to come. In view of this positive feedback, in closing the event, Ms Joanne Bondin called on all stakeholders towards a concerted national effort and use the MEA as a facilitator to take forward these recommendations.

The MEA will be producing a report featuring today's event and the entire consultation process to be presented to the authorities in its efforts to ensure that its recommendations are translated into action.