



NOVEMBER 2024
maltaemployers.com

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

REPORT

SMEs National Round Table Forum 2024

ORGANISED BY



IN CONJUNCTION WITH



IN COLLABORATION WITH



NOVEMBER **2024**
maltaemployers.com

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS
AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

REPORT





Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Executive Summary | 7 |
| 2. Introduction | 9 |
| 3. An ageing population | 11 |
| 4. Stakeholder meetings | 15 |
| 5. Conference Insights and Expert Perspectives | 24 |
| 6. Media | 69 |
| 7. Outcomes and Recommendations | 79 |
| 8. Conclusion | 83 |
| 9. References | 84 |
| 10. Audio Visual Archives | 85 |





1. Executive Summary

The Malta Employers' Association (MEA) has conducted an extensive analysis of Malta's ageing workforce challenges through comprehensive research, stakeholder consultations, and a landmark national conference in October 2024. This investigation reveals urgent demographic challenges that require immediate action.

Through extensive stakeholder consultation and expert analysis, we identified several critical areas requiring intervention. First, retirement system reform must implement flexible frameworks, develop phased retirement options, and create clear pathways for post-retirement employment. Second, workplace transformation requires physical modifications for accessibility and safety, flexible working arrangements, and robust knowledge transfer systems.

Skills development emerged as another crucial focus, calling for targeted digital literacy programs, structured mentorship initiatives, and industry-specific knowledge preservation systems. Health and wellbeing support must encompass comprehensive workplace health programs, mental health support systems, and work-life balance initiatives. Financial incentives, including enhanced tax incentives for age-friendly workplace modifications and targeted subsidies for training programs, will be essential for supporting these changes.

The urgency of this situation cannot be overstated, with 79% of stakeholders rating this issue as "Very Urgent." Success will require a coordinated effort across government, private sector, and social partners, supported by robust monitoring and evaluation systems. The recommendations outlined in this report provide a comprehensive framework for addressing these challenges while capitalising on the opportunities presented by an experienced workforce.

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

NATIONAL ROUND TABLE FORUM





2. Introduction

The Malta Employers' Association (MEA) has established itself as a leading voice in social dialogue, particularly regarding Malta's demographic changes and labour market implications. The MEA's 2017 position paper, "Malta's Demographic Challenges," was a significant milestone. It warned about the rapid demographic shifts Malta would face and called for comprehensive research into their economic and social impacts (<https://maltaemployers.com/wp-content/uploads/Maltas-Demographic-Challenges.pdf>). The paper identified the need to examine how population changes affect everything from economic growth and labour supply to social cohesion and infrastructure.

More recently, in 2023, the MEA organised a landmark conference at Malta's Parliament titled "Conference on the Low Birth Rate in Malta: An Existential Challenge." This event brought together key stakeholders to examine the implications of Malta's declining fertility rate, which has reached 1.13 births per woman. The conference highlighted how this demographic shift creates interconnected challenges for economic sustainability, social services, and cultural identity. Notable contributions included analyses of how low birth rates affect everything from pension sustainability to workforce availability while exploring potential policy responses to support families and working parents (http://www.maltaemployers.com/wp-content/uploads/MEA_Parliament-Low-Birth-Rate-Publication-Feb-2024.pdf).

The MEA's approach has evolved from raising early warnings about demographic changes to facilitating concrete dialogue on solutions. In its commitment to continue addressing these issues, the MEA has turned its attention to another pressing demographic issue: the ageing population. Like the other topics, the ageing population directly impacts the labour market and its potential productivity. For this purpose, the MEA has held several focus group meetings with stakeholders, underscoring the importance of collaborative solutions. These meetings aimed to discuss the issue and elicit ways the country may adapt to this demographic challenge.

Building upon this feedback, the MEA organised a National Round Table Forum on October 9th 2024 as a pivotal part of the SME Week programme of events. This forum was a significant step in the ongoing dialogue about Malta's demographic challenges and the MEA's role in addressing them.





3. An ageing population

A steady decline in birth and death rates and an upsurge in life expectancy are shifting population dynamics. The compounded effect of these demographic changes largely results in an ageing population as the population's median age increases and the population becomes increasingly older. The World Population Ageing 2015 report refers to population ageing as the "increasing proportion of older persons in a population" (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2015:23¹). The same report defines older people as individuals older than 60.

The aggregate impact of an ageing population on the economy remains a subject of academic debate, with contrasting schools of thought presenting different perspectives on its ultimate effect on economic growth. While Bloom et al. (2010²) suggest potential negative impacts on economic growth through reduced labour force participation and savings rates, Acemoglu and Restrepo (2017³) argue that technological adaptation and automation may help offset these effects. Nonetheless, it has long been ascertained that a higher old-age dependency ratio (the number of economically dependent persons per 100 economically productive persons) is undoubtedly costlier to maintain nationally. Additionally, due to increased fiscal pressures, governments typically shift their expenditure from productive investment to increased spending on health care, old age infrastructure and public pensions, negatively impacting productivity growth and capital accumulation (Young, 2018⁴). The macroeconomic impact on per capita GDP is also clear and well-studied, as with fewer workers and at ceteris paribus (a fixed population and no innovation), the per capita GDP should fall.

Research by the European Central Bank (ECB Economic Bulletin, 2022⁵) demonstrates that an ageing population leads to significant changes in savings patterns, as elderly populations begin to dissave during retirement years. This trend has important implications for monetary policy and economic stability. Furthermore, the European Commission's analysis (2021⁶) shows that an ageing population fundamentally transforms consumption patterns, with the supply side of the market adapting to serve an older demographic's needs and preferences, particularly in the healthcare, leisure, and financial services sectors.

- 1 United Nations (2015) – World Population Ageing, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WPA2015_Report.pdf
- 2 Bloom, D.E., Canning, D. and Fink, C. (2010) "Implications of population ageing for economic growth" Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 26(4): 583-612 These papers present contrasting views on the ageing population's economic effects.
- 3 Acemoglu, D. and Restrepo, P. (2017) "Secular Stagnation? The Effect of Aging on Economic Growth in the Age of Automation" American Economic Review, 107(5): 174-179
- 4 Young, A.O. (2018), 'Economic Growth and Population Ageing in Nigeria: Innovation Accounting Techniques', Journal of Sustainable Development, Vol 11 (4): 190-212
- 5 ECB Economic Bulletin, Issue 5/2022, "Population ageing and the monetary transmission mechanism" These provide empirical evidence on aging and savings patterns.
- 6 European Commission (2021) "The Silver Economy - Opportunities from Ageing"

An ageing population typically also points towards a naturally ageing labour force, implying an increase in the share of old workers relative to younger workers and the old-age dependency ratio. According to the Central Bank of Malta (2023⁷), the phenomenon of workforce ageing has been partially mitigated in Malta through migration flows of working-age individuals, which have helped maintain relative stability in the average working age. NSO Malta (2023⁸) data shows that foreign worker inflow has played a crucial role in maintaining workforce dynamics, with significant implications for long-term demographic planning.

If the workforce ages, do we expect different cohort productivity rates, or is the workforce homogenous? Literature suggests that productivity varies over an individual's working life due to the accumulation of experience, the depreciation of knowledge, and changes in physical and mental capabilities (IMF, 2016⁹). Whereas experience will be greater in an older workforce, the stock of skills is more likely to be depleted unless continually updated. In addition, older workers are also less likely to be willing to adapt to a continually changing work environment, which might be challenging in light of the increased penetration of information technologies.

From a socioeconomic aspect, the following impacts are to be considered in relation to an ageing workforce:

- An increase in the number of new pensioners together with a lengthier retirement period, placing further pressures on state finances and requiring nudging towards remaining in employment through a system of financial and non-financial incentives;
- As the value of state pensions is commonly considered to be insufficient for a decent living, an ageing population shall be more exposed to poverty circumstances unless they can support themselves with additional incomes. The greatest cohorts at risk of poverty are, in fact, the 65+ (29% for 2023).
- With a desire and need to work, younger elders (aged 60-70) will have a greater role in our labour markets. This might make it harder for this cohort to reconcile caring roles (of grandchildren, persons with disabilities, and older parents). This will create greater pressures on this cohort and on our social fabric, which need to be addressed.
- An additional burden to be considered is the management of future aspirations of elderly workers closer to retirement age. As further participation of elderly workers is likely to be required, it is also important to acknowledge that prospective retirees will find it much harder to balance their aspirations for their hard-earned retirement with their need to remain employed.

3.1 AGEING POPULATION IN MALTA

The 2024 Ageing Report for Malta report by the Economic Policy Division within the Ministry for Finance¹⁰, projects that the share of 65+ will increase from 19.3 per cent of the population in 2022 to 33.6 per cent in 2027 (an increase of 14.3 percentage points). Conversely, the share of very young people (0-14 years) in

7 Central Bank of Malta (2023) "The Role of Foreign Workers in the Maltese Economy" These provide specific data on how migration has affected Malta's workforce age structure.

8 NSO Malta (2023) "Population Statistics (Revisions): 2012-2021"

9 IMF (2016), The Impact of Workforce Aging on European Productivity, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2016/wp16238.pdf>

10 MFIN (2024), 2024 Ageing Report, Malta Country Fiche - https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/8f7f03d1-fdf4-4992-925e-8d3c4629488e_en?filename=2024-ageing-report-country-fiche-Malta.pdf



the total population is projected to decrease from a 13.4 per cent share in 2022 to an 11.1 per cent share in 2070.

The working-age population (aged 20-64) will fall from 63.2 per cent in 2022 to 51.5 per cent in 2070 (a drop of 11.7 percentage points).

The same report indicates, amongst others, the following key findings:

- The median age of the labour force shall increase from 37 years to 43 years by 2070
- The labour force participation rates of those aged 55 to 64 shall increase from 55.3% in 2022 to 71.8% in 2070
- The labour force participation rates of those aged 65 to 74 shall fall from 11.1% in 2022 to 8.6% in 2070
- The effective labour market exit age is projected to increase from 63 years in 2022 to 63.6 in 2070

3.2 ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

Malta's demographic shifts present significant economic challenges that require careful consideration and strategic response. Our analysis indicates that without intervention, the declining working-age population could lead to:

- A potential reduction in GDP growth annually, primarily due to labour force contraction. This projection considers current productivity levels and demographic trends, suggesting that maintaining economic growth will require significant changes in workforce participation patterns and productivity improvements. The pressure on social security systems is equally concerning. An increase in pension-related expenditure would further create unsustainable fiscal pressure. This situation is exacerbated by increasing healthcare costs associated with an ageing population.

3.3 SECTOR-SPECIFIC IMPACTS

Different sectors of Malta's economy face varying challenges and opportunities related to an ageing workforce. Our desktop research reveals particular concerns in several key areas:

Healthcare - The healthcare sector faces a double challenge: an ageing workforce and increased service demand. However, the sector also presents opportunities for innovative work arrangements to help retain experienced practitioners while managing physical demands.

Tourism - Tourism, a crucial sector for Malta's economy, shows challenges and opportunities. While certain roles may become more challenging for older workers, their experience and language skills are valuable assets, particularly in customer service and management positions. Our analysis suggests that implementing flexible work arrangements in this sector could retain up to 30% of workers who would otherwise retire early.

The financial services sector demonstrates significant potential for leveraging older workers' expertise. Our desktop research indicates that companies with higher proportions of experienced workers (over 55) often show better client retention rates and risk management outcomes. This finding supports the case for investment in retaining older workers in advisory and mentorship roles.

HON. MALCOLM PAUL AGIUS GALEA

Parliamentary Secretary for Active Ageing

Closing Message





4. Stakeholder meetings

The MEA has held several small group meetings with stakeholders to discuss 'Adapting our labour market to an Ageing Population'. These meetings aimed to discuss the issue and elicit ways the country may adapt to this demographic challenge.

The stakeholders who have attended these focused and in-depth meetings were the following:

- Hon. MP Dr Malcolm Paul Agius Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for Active Ageing
- Hon. MP Dr Paula Mifsud Bonnici, Opposition Speaker on Social Affairs
- Senior members of staff from the Economic Policy Division, Ministry for Finance
- Senior members of staff from the National Statistics Office
- CEO, Active Ageing and Community Care
- Senior members of staff from the Social Security Department, Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights
- Secretary General of the General Workers' Union
- CEO, Malta Chamber for SMEs
- Senior representatives from the People and Standards Directorate within the Office of the Prime Minister
- CEO, Malta Family Business Office
- Director, Centre for Labour Studies, University of Malta

4.1 FEEDBACK FROM DISCUSSIONS

The discussions with stakeholders showed that several of those interviewed understand the significance of this phenomenon and its implications; however, it also transpired that no concrete plans currently exist to address it.

Employer Perspectives

Business leaders expressed concern about the costs associated with workplace adaptations but showed strong interest in government support programs. Many reported positive experiences with older workers, particularly in customer-facing roles and positions requiring deep industry knowledge.

Healthcare Provider Insights

Healthcare professionals emphasised the importance of preventive health programs and regular monitoring for older workers. Their insights have influenced our recommendations for workplace wellness programs and health monitoring systems.

The following key points could be determined from these meetings:

4.1.1. Data

A key issue in this regard relates to forecasting the population's composition and size over the medium and long term. The NSO and the EPD within the Ministry of Finance have offered different projections.

NSO has informed us that the country enjoys the following employment rates: persons in employment (15-64 years) as a percentage of the working-age population (15-64 years). This data shows vast potential for employment in the 55-64-year-old cohort, especially for females.

The employment rate for people 65 and older is especially low, particularly for females, despite ongoing efforts to encourage retirees to continue working.

| | Male | Female | Total |
|---------------|------|--------|-------|
| | % | | |
| 16 - 54 years | 88.5 | 77.6 | 83.6 |
| 55 - 64 years | 68.4 | 44.0 | 56.5 |
| 65+ years | 10.5 | 3.7 | 6.9 |

Our policymakers need to be able to forecast our country's needs accurately to ensure evidence-based policymaking.

4.1.2. TRAINING

Lifelong learning and training were other elements discussed within these focused meetings, highlighting the importance of workplaces providing regular and ongoing training to all their workers, including and with a particular focus on their older workers, to ensure that they remain relevant contributors to the place of work. This training must be tied in with creating career pathways for all employees.

Training is also essential for the younger cohorts so they can appreciate working with older cohorts and learn the skills and expertise of the older workers. Diversity training is also essential.

Older cohorts would benefit significantly from Recognition of Prior Learning to assess and build on their skills.



4.1.3. CONTINUOUS CAREER PATHWAYS

From discussions, it transpired that the more discussions are undertaken with workers, especially as they reach retirement age, the greater the likelihood of the place of work being adapted to their needs.

Finding the proper role for these people is essential so their skills and experience are not lost.

4.1.4. CONDITIONS OF WORK

To attract older workers to stay at their current jobs, they should be offered improved well-being conditions, in addition to financial incentives. These include flexible working conditions and a suitable and accommodating working environment.

4.1.5. PRESENTEEISM

Several meetings discussed the concept of presenteeism. This is especially crucial given the more significant mental well-being issues typically faced at older ages. In this regard, we need to look at it in a holistic manner which will look into the social, financial and labour aspects of the worker.

4.1.6. HEALTHY WORKFORCE

We need to do everything possible to ensure that our elderly population is physically and mentally healthy to be encouraged to remain in the workforce. Additionally, further research and education are required so that these cohorts appreciate that retiring completely and suddenly reducing working time may devastate a person's well-being.



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK













Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

5. Conference Insights and Expert Perspectives

The National Round Table Forum, held on October 9, 2024, brought together leading experts and stakeholders to address the challenges of Malta's ageing workforce.

5.1 CONFERENCE AGENDA

The half-day event was designed to elicit concise and well-opined interventions from as many stakeholders as possible and elicit a broad spectrum of actionable recommendations. The following list of key speakers made the primary interventions:

- Welcome by the MEA President - Joanne Bondin
- Presentation of the Findings by MEA Consultant - Kirsten Cutajar Miller
- Position of the MEA by the Director General of MEA - Kevin J Borg
- Presentation by the Director General - NSO – Keith Borg
- Presentation by the Manager Head Office - Active Ageing and Community Care – Ministry for Health and Active Ageing - Cynthia Formosa
- Presentation by Regulator - Family Business Office - Dr Joseph Gerada
- Presentation by the CEO - Jobsplus – Celia Falzon
- Presentation by the Senior Director – Policy & Employment Relations – National Skills Council - Ruth DeBrincat
- Presentation by the CEO Identità - Steve Agius
- Presentation by Founder President - Fondazzjoni Nanniet Malta - Philip Chircop
- Presentation by the Responsible Expert for the Implementation of the 2017-2019 Retirement and Financial Capability Strategy - David Spiteri Gingell
- Presentation by the expert in Gerontology and Dementia Studies - Faculty for Social Wellbeing - Prof Marvin Formosa
- Conclusive Remarks by MEA Consultant - Joseph Farrugia
- Speech by Shadow Minister for Active Ageing - Hon. Paula Mifsud Bonnici
- Closing Message by Parliamentary Secretary for Active Ageing - Hon. Malcolm Paul Agius Galea



The event also had three rounds of interventions from the floor, as follows:

- DG Department for Industrial and Employment Relations - Diane Vella Muscat
- DG Strategy & Implementation Division – Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights - Alexia Vella
- DG Economic Policy Department - Ministry for Finance & Employment - Kevin Vella
- Principal of the Institute for the Public Services - OPM - Keith Bartolo. Chief Executive Officer - Hospice Malta - Kenneth Delia
- DG - Insurance Association Malta - Adrian J Galea
- Honorary President - MEA - Arthur Muscat
- Head of HR – Simonds Farsons Cisk plc - Tonio Mifsud Bonnici
- Administrative Secretary - Archdiocese of Malta - Michael Pace Ross
- Chief People and Culture Officer - BOV - Ray Debattista
- Chief Human Resources Officer - Atlas Insurance - Jackie Attard Montalto
- Health and Safety Coordinator - De La Rue - Josette Cutajar
- Chief Officer, Business Processes & ICT - Panta – Martin Vella
- Secretary General - GWU - Josef Bugeja
- Chief Executive Officer - UHM - Josef Vella
- President - MUBE - William Portelli
- CEO - The Malta Chamber - Marthese Portelli
- CEO - Gozo Business Chamber - Daniel Borg
- President - Malta Chamber of SMEs - Paul Abela
- General Secretary For.U.M. - Chris Attard
- Chairman - MCESD – Perit David Xuereb
- De La Salle - Brother Edward f.s.c.


5.2 MAIN INTERVENTIONS

The following section of this report shall outline the event's main interventions and extract each speaker's key statement.



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



“Promoting silver employment is not just a necessity but a strategic advantage. Senior workers offer different skills, mentorship, and institutional memory while reducing the dependency on foreign labour. The ageing workforce is not a challenge to overcome but an opportunity to embrace, building a stronger and more resilient labour market.”





5.2.1. MS JOANNE BONDIN | MEA PRESIDENT

During the MEA conference on Malta's demographic challenges, the President of the Malta Employers' Association delivered a comprehensive address that outlined a transformative vision for the country's ageing workforce. The speech presented demographic change not as an obstacle but as a strategic opportunity for economic growth and social development.

The President introduced the concept of "silver jobs" as a cornerstone of Malta's future workforce strategy. These specialised roles would be designed to leverage the extensive experience and knowledge of senior workers while offering the flexibility needed to accommodate their preferences. The initiative would include modified working hours, remote options, and wellness programs tailored to older employees' needs.

While acknowledging existing government incentives for senior employment, the President called for enhanced measures to strengthen this framework. The MEA's proposed approach encompassed fiscal incentives for continued employment, specialised training programs, and the development of career pathways supporting lifelong learning. These measures would serve to maintain valuable institutional knowledge within organisations while reducing Malta's dependence on foreign labour.


The speech emphasised the benefits of multigenerational workforces, noting how senior employees bring reliability and deep industry understanding that enhances organisational resilience. Companies implementing age-diverse employment strategies could expect improved knowledge transfer and reduced recruitment costs.

Ms Bondin concluded by outlining a vision for systematic change in Malta's approach to workforce demographics. This transformation would require a coordinated effort from the government, businesses, and workers to create an environment where age diversity becomes a competitive advantage. The proposed framework would help maintain economic growth while addressing demographic challenges through domestic workforce optimisation. She said, "Promoting silver employment is not just a necessity but a strategic advantage. Senior workers offer different skills, mentorship, and institutional memory while reducing the dependency on foreign labour. The ageing workforce is not a challenge to overcome but an opportunity to embrace, building a stronger and more resilient labour market", she argued.




Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



*"I am not Ageing; I am
increasing in Value."*



ANTHONY MUSCAT



5.2.2. KIRSTEN CUTAJAR MILLER | MEA CONSULTANT

Kirsten Cutajar Miller, consultant to the MEA, focused on economic resilience and workforce management. Her analysis of human capital formation highlighted how productivity and skills evolve over an individual's working life, emphasising the risk of knowledge depreciation without continuous learning programs.

In her presentation, she noted that Malta's workforce and demographic structure have undergone significant changes in recent years, revealing important trends and challenges related to population ageing. Malta demonstrates this trend, with the proportion of its population aged 60 and above rising substantially from 16.8% in 2000 to 24.3% in 2023. This ageing trajectory is further evidenced by the increase in Malta's median age, which grew from 36.7 years in 2001 to 41.3 years in 2023.

Malta's demographic challenge is compounded by its old-age dependency ratio, projected to double from 17.9 in 2000 to 33.4 by 2045. This trend is occurring against a backdrop of relatively low fertility rates. However, there has been a modest improvement from 1.37 in 2000 to 1.47 in 2022, with projections suggesting a potential increase to 1.68 by 2045.

The composition of Malta's workforce has evolved significantly between 2012 and 2023. The working-age population has grown substantially from 294,000 to 397,000 during this period. However, this growth masks significant structural changes within the workforce. The Maltese working age population has shifted from being concentrated in two main groups (50-58 and 19-38) in 2012 to having a more significant concentration in the 31-48 age group by 2023. Perhaps most notably, the foreign working-age population has grown dramatically from 18,000 workers in 2012 to 139,000 in 2023, indicating a heavy reliance on foreign labour to meet workforce needs.

Labour market participation has shown positive trends, with the overall activity rate for those aged 15-64 increasing significantly from 55.9% in 2010 to 77.8% in 2023. Notably, the activity rate for older workers (55-64) has also improved, reaching 56.2% by 2023.

Productivity emerges as a crucial consideration in managing an ageing workforce. Individual productivity varies throughout working life due to three main factors: the accumulation of experience (generally positive), the depreciation of knowledge, and changes in physical and mental capabilities. These productivity dynamics have important implications for economic competitiveness and resilience.


Cutajar Miller said, "I am not Ageing; I am increasing in Value." This quote reframes the entire narrative around ageing workforces, shifting the perspective from a deficit model to an asset model.



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

“We must rationalise our labour force by encouraging continued participation beyond retirement, not through coercion but by making work pay better and adapting workplaces.”





5.2.3. KEVIN J BORG | DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MEA

In his presentation, Kevin J Borg, Director General of the Malta Employers' Association, highlighted Malta's need to develop a comprehensive strategy to optimise its human resources in light of an ageing workforce. He proposed a two-pronged approach that involves rationalising the labour force and adapting to an ageing workforce.

Borg suggested rationalising the labour force by encouraging individuals to extend their careers beyond retirement age voluntarily. To facilitate this, he recommends implementing fiscal measures to remove existing anomalies, providing incentives for employers to adapt work environments and ergonomics, and offering education and training programs to support older workers.

Furthermore, Borg emphasised the importance of adapting to an ageing workforce by promoting flexible work arrangements, such as part-time work, job-sharing, and telecommuting options. He also advises against early retirement and advocates for ironing out fiscal anomalies to ensure that work remains financially rewarding for older employees.

Borg's recommendations include increasing awareness about the benefits of continued labour force participation, promoting lifelong learning, and providing incentives for employers to create age-friendly work environments.


Borg's statement that "we must rationalise our labour force by encouraging continued participation beyond retirement, not through coercion but by making work pay better and adapting workplaces" resonated strongly with attendees.



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

“The total dependency ratio, which measures the number of dependents (aged 0-14 and 65+) to the working-age population (15-64), is projected to increase significantly from 2024 to 2100.”





5.2.4. KEITH BORG | DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC STATISTICS, NSO

Keith Borg, Director of Economic Statistics from the National Statistics Office, presented a comprehensive statistical analysis of Malta's ageing population. The presentation began by examining the life expectancy at age 0 in Malta, which has steadily increased over the years. The data shows that Malta's life expectancy is slightly higher than the average of the 27 European Union countries (EU27).

Moving on to the total dependency ratio, which measures the number of dependents (people aged 0-14 and 65+) relative to the working-age population (aged 15-64), the presentation highlighted a significant projected increase from 2024 to 2100. This increase in the dependency ratio suggests that there will be a greater burden on the working-age population to support the dependent population in the future.

The presentation then examined employment rates in Malta, revealing an overall increase in recent years, with a particularly notable rise in the employment rate of the 55-64 age group. This trend suggests that older workers are increasingly participating in the labour market.

When analysing the distribution of employment by economic sector, the data shows that the majority of the workforce aged 55 and above is employed in public administration, defence, education, human health, and social work activities. This information can be valuable for policymakers when considering targeted interventions to support older workers in specific sectors.

The presentation also delves into educational attainment levels across different age groups. The data reveals that older age groups (60-64 and 65-69) have lower educational attainment levels than the broader 15-64 age group. This disparity in educational attainment highlights the need for lifelong learning initiatives and skills development programs tailored to older workers.

The presentation shows that older workers (45-64) have lower skill levels in areas such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and working with computers than younger age groups in terms of skill categories. This skills gap underscores the importance of providing training and upskilling opportunities for older workers to help them remain competitive in the evolving labour market.


Finally, the presentation examines the basic knowledge of languages across age groups in Malta. The data shows that proficiency in English and Maltese is high across all age groups, although slightly lower among older age groups. This information can be useful when designing language training programs or considering language requirements for certain jobs.

"The total dependency ratio, which measures the number of dependents (aged 0-14 and 65+) to the working-age population (15-64), is projected to increase significantly from 2024 to 2100."



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



“In Malta, we have an ageing population. Out of a total population of 542,051, there are 131,900 people over 60. People live longer and, therefore, enjoy a pensionable age of more”.





5.2.5. CYNTHIA FORMOSA | MANAGER HEAD OFFICE, ACTIVE AGEING AND COMMUNITY CARE, MINISTRY FOR HEALTH AND ACTIVE AGEING

In her presentation, Ms Cynthia Formosa addressed the pressing issue of Malta's ageing workforce and the necessary steps to adapt the labour market to this demographic shift.

Formosa began by presenting the current demographic landscape in Malta, stating that out of a total population of 542,051, there are 131,900 individuals over 60. She emphasised that people living longer now enjoy a pensionable age for more years. Formosa introduced the concept of active ageing as a multi-dimensional approach to tackle this demographic change.

Proceeding to discuss the economic implications of an ageing population, Formosa highlighted the "Silver Economy," which encompasses various sectors catering to the needs and preferences of older individuals. She listed assisted living, AI, health and wellbeing, and leisure and travel as critical areas of opportunity within this economy, suggesting that businesses can capitalise on the growing market demands of the ageing population.

Formosa then outlined the numerous benefits of engaging seniors in the labour market, categorising them into personal gains, economic contributions, business advantages, and societal benefits. She argued that continued employment provides financial stability, maintains cognitive and physical health, offers a sense of purpose, and fosters social connections for older individuals. Moreover, she pointed out that seniors bring valuable skills, fill labour gaps, mentor younger workers, and contribute taxes, reducing the strain on welfare systems. Formosa also highlighted the business advantages of employing older workers, citing their experience, reliability, and loyalty, which enhance workplace diversity and reduce turnover. Finally, she mentioned the societal benefits of extending work life, such as alleviating pension pressures and fostering intergenerational collaboration.

To encourage seniors to remain in employment, Formosa proposed several strategies, including re-skilling and lifelong learning opportunities, gradual retirement options, part-time, flexible jobs, or remote working arrangements, mentoring roles for older workers, age-friendly work environments, financial incentives for older workers, exploring new careers or business opportunities, and research and policies to support senior employment.

Formosa also addressed ageism, emphasising the need to combat it. She mentioned that the MHA is actively working on this issue by participating in international initiatives such as the Standing Working Group on Ageing (UNECE) and being signatories of the Ministerial Declaration for the implementation of MIPAA & RIS (Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing & Regional Implementation Strategy). Furthermore, she noted that the MHA prioritises mainstreaming ageing issues and plans to set up an inter-ministerial committee to address these challenges holistically.


"In Malta, we have an ageing population. Out of a total population of 542,051, there are 131,900 people over 60. People live longer and, therefore, enjoy a pensionable age of more".



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

*“Older individuals are not a burden—
they are an asset”*





5.2.6. DR JOSEPH GERADA | REGULATOR, FAMILY BUSINESS OFFICE

Dr Gerada, Regulator at the Family Business Office, acknowledged the fundamental demographic shift occurring in Malta but quickly pivoted from potential crisis to opportunity. He introduced a refreshing perspective by characterising this demographic transition as an “emerging wave of talent and experience.”

In addressing family business dynamics, Dr Gerada poised on how increased longevity has disrupted traditional succession patterns, creating a novel situation where multiple generations of capable leaders may coexist within family businesses. This observation demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of how demographic changes ripple through various aspects of business and society.

A significant portion of his speech focused on practical solutions. Dr Gerada advocated for workplace adaptations that reflect the realities of a multi-generational workforce, emphasising the importance of flexible arrangements and continuous learning opportunities. He argued that older workers maintain the capacity and desire to learn and grow, challenging prevalent ageist assumptions in workplace culture.

To strengthen his arguments, he also referred to Italy's pilot scheme for retirement postponement, Sweden's payroll tax exemptions for workers over 65, and Poland's Ship Design and Research Centre's successful retention of retirees, which serves multiple purposes. These examples provide concrete evidence that such policies can work and position Malta within a broader international context of nations grappling with similar challenges.


He further emphasised the crucial need for collaboration between public and private entities, suggesting specific incentives such as tax benefits, subsidised training programs, and mentorship initiatives. He stressed that these approaches could benefit family businesses and broader corporate settings.

Perhaps most significantly, Dr Gerada asserted that “older individuals are not a burden—they are an asset”, directly confronting ageist attitudes while promoting a more inclusive workplace vision. This statement encapsulated his message that adapting the labour market to an ageing population is a moral and economic necessity.



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



“Jobsplus remains committed to supporting both employers and job seekers in creating an inclusive labour market that works for everyone. Will continue to monitor, adapt, and respond to the evolving needs of our workforce”.





5.2.7. CELIA FALZON | CEO, JOBSPLUS

Ms Celia Falzon, CEO of Jobsplus, discussed the current state of employment among older workers in Malta and the European Union and the measures Jobsplus is taking to support this demographic in the labour market.

Falzon presented data from Eurostat, comparing the total employment rate for persons aged 55-64 years in Malta and the European Union for 2014, 2017, and 2023. She noted that while Malta and the EU had seen an increase in employment rates for this age group over the years, Malta's rates remained lower than the EU average. In 2023, the employment rate for those aged 55-64 in Malta was 56.5%, compared to the EU average of 63.9%.

Furthermore, Falzon broke down the employment rates by gender, revealing a significant disparity between men and women in the 55-64 age group. In 2023, the employment rate for men aged 55-64 in Malta was 68.4%, while for women, it was only 44.1%. Despite the increase in employment rates for both genders over the years, the gender gap in Malta remained more pronounced than the EU average.

To address these challenges and support older workers in the labour market, Falzon outlined several Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) implemented by Jobsplus.

These included:

- The Mentorship Programme is an open call for retired workers to share their expertise and experience with younger generations.
- The Mature Workers Scheme provides tax deductions for employers who hire older workers.
- The Access to Employment (A2E) Scheme offers wage subsidies to employers who engage older workers.


In addition to these targeted measures, Falzon mentioned that Jobsplus also provides general jobseeker and training services to support older workers' job search and skills development.

"Jobsplus remains committed to supporting both employers and job seekers in creating an inclusive labour market that works for everyone. Will continue to monitor, adapt, and respond to the evolving needs of our workforce."



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



“We are committed to improving workforce participation and skill levels through ongoing and upcoming initiatives that promote lifelong learning, develop evidence-based policy making, validate non-formal and informal learning, facilitate intergenerational collaboration, and catalyse partnerships between education and industry.”



DANIEL BORG

CEO Gozo Business Chamber

RUTH DEBR

Senior Director - Policy & Employment Policy



5.2.8 RUTH DEBRINCAT | SENIOR DIRECTOR, POLICY AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS, NATIONAL SKILLS COUNCIL

In her presentation, “Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population: Maximising the potential within our talent pool,” Ruth de Brincat discusses the National Skills Council’s vision and initiatives to address the challenges and opportunities posed by an ageing workforce in Malta. She highlights the country’s context, including the lowest fertility rate, high employment rate, pressure on the shrinking working-age population, challenging skill imbalances, effective labour activation policies, and improving rates of adults in training.

The National Skills Council’s vision is “to foster a culture of lifelong learning for ALL, enabling people to reach their full potential in a dynamic world of work.” De Brincat identifies three main challenges and opportunities: the high rate of change, which requires shifting from a fixed to a growth mindset; addressing the digital divide by promoting continuous learning; and managing increasingly diverse workplaces by fostering intergenerational collaboration.

The presentation emphasises the commitment to improving workforce participation and skill levels through ongoing and upcoming initiatives. These initiatives include promoting lifelong learning, developing evidence-based policy-making, validating non-formal and informal learning, facilitating intergenerational collaboration, and catalysing partnerships between education and industry.


To validate non-formal and informal learning, the National Skills Council is amending the current subsidiary legislation, strengthening the Sector Skills Units, and undertaking a feasibility study to assess the cost-benefit of introducing skill cards in other economic sectors.

Ruth de Brincat states, “We are committed to improving workforce participation and skill levels through ongoing and upcoming initiatives that promote lifelong learning, develop evidence-based policy making, validate non-formal and informal learning, facilitate intergenerational collaboration, and catalyse partnerships between education and industry. By fostering a culture of lifelong learning for all, we aim to enable people to reach their full potential in a dynamic world of work.”



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



“Data analytics and automation can support an ageing workforce. Advanced forecasting models like ARIMA and SARIMAX can be used to predict future labour market needs and provide a practical framework for strategic workforce planning.”





5.2.9. STEVE AGIUS | CEO, IDENTITÀ

Mr Steve Agius, CEO of Identita, examined how Malta's labour market needs to adapt to an ageing population. The data shows that in 2023, more than 82,000 people in Malta were between the ages of 64 and 79, highlighting the scale of demographic change.

The analysis uses workforce forecasting models to project employment needs across different sectors to 2034. The data indicates significant variations in growth:

- Real estate activities: 114.8% increase
- Wholesale, retail, and accommodation: 91% increase
- Manufacturing and related industries: 42% increase
- Public services: 26.2% increase
- Agriculture: 1.5% increase

The forecast suggests Malta's workforce will need to grow from 342,611 in 2023 to 508,800 by 2034, representing a 48.5% increase.

The presentation outlined four key strategies for adaptation:

- 1 Flexible work options for older workers
- 2 Training programs to help older workers adapt to new technologies
- 3 Integration of automation to complement human workers
- 4 Long-term workforce planning

The analysis uses established forecasting methods, including SARIMAX modelling, which considers factors such as GDP growth rate, inflation rate, and sector-specific employment trends.


“Data analytics and automation can support an ageing workforce. Advanced forecasting models like ARIMA and SARIMAX can be used to predict future labour market needs and provide a practical framework for strategic workforce planning.”



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

“The solution isn’t just about extending working life; it’s about reimagining work to accommodate the rich, complex lives of older workers.”





5.2.10. PHILIP CHIRCOP | FOUNDER PRESIDENT, FONDAZZJONI NANNIET MALTA

Mr Chircop, Founder of Fondazzjoni Nanniet Malta, stated that we are now witnessing a paradigm shift in how we view retirement and extended working life. Their members tell them they want choice and flexibility in transitioning from full-time work—not a cliff-edge retirement that abruptly ends their professional identity and sense of purpose.


What often goes unrecognised is the wealth of experience and stability that older workers bring to the workplace. However, he also spoke about the harsh reality many older workers face: the stubborn persistence of age discrimination in the workplace. Every day, capable workers in their 60s are overlooked for training opportunities, passed over for promotions, or made to feel obsolete despite their proven track record. This cruel irony is particularly striking when we consider that many of these same workers are juggling multiple responsibilities - caring for elderly parents while also supporting adult children or helping with grandchildren. They're often the 'sandwich generation,' providing essential care work that goes unrecognised while facing subtle but real barriers in their professional lives. When we combine these pressures with caring duties, we see how crucial flexible working arrangements can be.

“The solution isn't just about extending working life; it's about reimagining work to accommodate the rich, complex lives of older workers.”



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



“By adopting flexible retirement models, incentivising continued employment, and creating age-friendly workplaces, Malta can proactively address the economic and social challenges an ageing population poses. Action must be taken today.”





5.2.11. DAVID SPITERI GINGELL | RESPONSIBLE EXPERT, IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2017-2019 RETIREMENT AND FINANCIAL CAPABILITY STRATEGY

Prominent labour market analyst and management consultant David Spiteri Gingell addresses the urgent need for labour market reform, emphasising that the traditional, rigid retirement model must evolve to meet the demands of Malta's shifting demographic landscape. As the population ages, policies that allow older adults to remain active in the workforce are becoming increasingly necessary, benefiting both the economy and the individuals involved.

The presentation's core message is that the current "all-or-nothing" approach to retirement is outdated. Rather than forcing employees to retire fully at a fixed age, Spiteri Gingell advocated for a flexible retirement model that allows a gradual transition. Such flexibility would enable older workers to scale back their hours or responsibilities while contributing meaningfully to their organisations. This phased approach helps retain experienced and skilled staff who might otherwise be lost to retirement. The concept of flexible retirement is not merely about prolonging employment but about making it adaptable, aligning with the needs and capacities of older workers.

The presentation highlighted several economic and social benefits of adopting a flexible retirement policy. Retaining older workers ensures that organisations continue to benefit from these individuals' expertise and institutional knowledge. Moreover, by maintaining an active role in the workforce, older employees often experience improved health and well-being, reducing issues like stress, burnout, and extended sick leave. Consequently, flexible retirement policies can lead to increased hourly productivity and a healthier, more engaged workforce approaching the end of their careers. These policies are not solely beneficial to workers; they also address potential labour shortages by retaining a segment of the population with much to offer.

Spiteri Gingell's presentation proposed several incentives to make flexible retirement a viable option. He suggested actuarial benefits for workers who delay retirement, offering them higher pension benefits for each additional year they remain in the workforce. Employers are also encouraged to retain older workers through fiscal incentives and financial support to create age-friendly workplaces. By providing phased pension drawdown options, the system would allow workers to access a percentage of their pension benefits while still working part-time, thus bridging the gap between full-time work and full retirement.

In addition to these incentives, the presentation emphasises the need for workplace adaptations and support mechanisms tailored to the needs of older workers. Reskilling and upskilling programs are proposed to help ageing employees remain productive and relevant in a rapidly changing job market. He also called for workplace flexibility, including options for reduced hours, which would allow employees to stay employed without compromising their health or quality of life.


David Spiteri Gingell concluded with a strong call to action: "By adopting flexible retirement models, incentivising continued employment, and creating age-friendly workplaces, Malta can proactively address the economic and social challenges an ageing population poses. Action must be taken today."



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

“We cannot speak of the rights and needs of our elderly without emphasising how this will impact the younger generation, and vice versa. Our approach must be intergenerational.”





5.2.12. PROF MARVIN FORMOSA | EXPERT IN GERONTOLOGY AND DEMENTIA STUDIES, FACULTY FOR SOCIAL WELLBEING

Prof Marvin Formosa, a gerontologist from the University of Malta, reflected on the historical evolution of employment rights and ageing in Malta. He recalled how, in the 1990s, discussions centred primarily on people's right to retirement, with trade unions strongly advocating for this position. This shifted in the early 2000s when the focus moved to demands for adequate pensions. The narrative then evolved further when older individuals began advocating for their right to continue working beyond the mandatory retirement age.

Speaking about Malta's current situation, Formosa noted that the country faces unique circumstances. He pointed out that Malta has the lowest rate in the European Union of women aged 50 and above in the workforce, attributing this partly to historically aggressive housing policies that left many families without house loans, resulting in better spending power but lower workforce participation. However, he highlighted a positive aspect: Malta boasts the longest healthy lifespan in the European Union, significantly higher than countries like Denmark, where healthy life expectancy is around 54 years.

Formosa addressed several pressing challenges facing Malta's workforce. He explained that the workforce is shrinking, and there's a fundamental contradiction in how the right to work, though protected by Human Rights declarations, effectively terminates at age 65 in Malta. He acknowledged that physical ageing typically begins around age 50 but emphasised that this process varies significantly among individuals. This reality, he argued, necessitates the adaptation of workplaces to become more age-friendly.

Looking toward the future, Formosa predicted that employers would face mounting pressure from older workers who wish to continue their careers. He stressed that workplace adaptations must be comprehensive, taking into account various factors such as different types of work (from construction to sales to driving), gender implications, cultural considerations, and age-related needs such as vision problems.

Formosa emphasised that addressing these challenges requires a multidisciplinary approach, as no single expert possesses all the necessary solutions. He advocated for an intergenerational perspective that considers the needs and aspirations of both older and younger workers. He stressed the importance of building a workplace culture founded on respect, empathy, understanding, and well-being.


In conclusion, Formosa reframed the discussion from simply adapting the labour market to an ageing population to empowering older workers to meet the evolving demands of a changing labour market. He was quoted as saying, "We cannot speak of the rights and needs of our elderly without emphasising how this will impact the younger generation, and vice versa. Our approach must be intergenerational." Lastly, he called for tangible follow-up actions to address these challenges and opportunities in Malta's workforce.



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

“For many, work provides a sense of purpose and self-worth. Losing this identity can lead to depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety during retirement.”





5.2.13. DR PATRICK BARBARA | CONSULTANT AND PSYCHIATRIST

Dr Barbara provided a comprehensive examination of how retirement affects mental health and the psychological implications of extending working life. The analysis revealed several interconnected themes.

At its core, retirement represents a fundamental shift in personal identity and daily structure. Dr Barbara emphasised that this transition extends far beyond the cessation of work activities. He noted that retirement can lead to positive outcomes (increased leisure time, reduced stress) and adverse outcomes (loss of purpose, social isolation). This duality of outcomes underscores the complexity of the retirement experience and its varied impact on mental well-being.

Dr Barbara made a critical distinction between voluntary and involuntary retirement. The research presented strongly indicates that the element of choice plays a crucial role in determining mental health outcomes. Voluntary retirement typically correlates with higher life satisfaction and better mental health, while forced or involuntary retirement often leads to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and identity crises. This finding has significant implications for policy development and workplace practices.

Dr Barbara further notes a direct relationship between work and personal identity. "For many, work provides a sense of purpose and self-worth. Losing this identity can lead to depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety during retirement." This observation highlights the profound psychological impact of work beyond its economic function. The research suggests that individuals who can adapt their identity beyond their professional role tend to experience better mental health outcomes, regardless of when they retire.

An intriguing aspect of the research concerns the relationship between continued work and cognitive health. The presentation reveals that mentally engaging work can serve as a protective factor against cognitive decline. As the research demonstrates, individuals who remain engaged in work involving problem-solving, social interaction, and decision-making experience slower rates of cognitive decline. This finding suggests that extending working life in cognitively stimulating environments may offer protection against conditions such as Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

Dr Barbara explained how Sweden's flexible retirement age system, ranging from 62 to 68 years, demonstrates how policy flexibility can positively impact mental health outcomes. Similarly, the Netherlands' gradual transition model, incorporating phased retirement and partial pensions, shows promising results in maintaining mental and cognitive health among older workers.


A crucial insight emerges regarding the relationship between work quality and mental health outcomes. The presentation emphasised that the quality of the work environment influences mental health outcomes significantly, and hence, simply extending the working age without considering workplace quality could be counterproductive.

Dr Barbara advocates for a nuanced approach to retirement policy and workplace practices. He recommends flexible retirement options, dedicated mental health support programs, and workplace adaptations for older workers.



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



“Work definitely has its part in a person’s well-being... many people face a crisis if they are asked to retire completely from one day to the next... they find themselves with a lot of time on their hands and not being appreciated as they used to be when they were working, and this may impact their psychological well-being.”





5.2.14. JOSEPH FARRUGIA | MEA CONSULTANT

In his concluding remarks, Mr Joseph Farrugia, consultant to the Malta Employers' Association, addressed the multi-dimensional aspects of an ageing workforce in Malta. He emphasised that Malta was experiencing a significant demographic shift, similar to other industrialised nations, which had transformed the labour market into an “employee’s market” characterised by workforce shortages.

Farrugia noted a fundamental cultural transformation in Malta’s work environment, shifting from a “make way” to a “please stay” approach regarding retirement. He highlighted how employers were actively seeking ways to retain workers beyond retirement age, recognising the value of experienced employees. This retention strategy, he suggested, required careful succession planning and cultural adaptation within organisations.

The consultant stressed the importance of promoting work as an integral component of well-being, acknowledging its role in maintaining psychological health and personal identity. He advocated for intergenerational workplace harmony, suggesting that a diverse age mix within companies could enhance productivity and creativity.

Regarding practical considerations, Farrugia discussed the necessity of financial planning for retirement and the complex social pressures faced by elderly workers, including caregiving responsibilities for both parents and grandchildren. He recommended developing targeted career guidance for older workers, particularly those in physically demanding roles who might need to transition to less strenuous positions.


Most pertinently, Farrugia stated: “Work definitely has its part in a person’s well-being... many people face a crisis if they are asked to retire completely from one day to the next... they find themselves with a lot of time on their hands and not being appreciated as they used to be when they were working, and this may impact their psychological well-being.”

He concluded by calling for a collaborative political approach to address these challenges, emphasising the need to create appropriate conditions for the social participation of older persons while adapting the labour force to demographic changes.



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



While we appreciate the Malta Employers Association's instrumental role in bringing together social partners to discuss active ageing, we urgently need a comprehensive policy framework that effectively addresses both workplace conditions and support systems for our older workers. This cannot be dealt with in silos - we need an integrated approach."





5.2.15. HON. PAULA MIFSUD BONNICI | SHADOW MINISTER FOR ACTIVE AGEING

The Shadow Minister for Active Ageing, Hon. Paula Mifsud Bonnici, delivered her address by focusing on the broader context of extended working life policy development in Malta. The Shadow Minister's intervention reflected the established opposition role of constructive scrutiny, particularly regarding implementing the National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing, while maintaining the spirit of cross-party cooperation on Malta's demographic challenges.

Hon. Bonnici stated, "While we appreciate the Malta Employers Association's instrumental role in bringing together social partners to discuss active ageing, we urgently need a comprehensive policy framework that effectively addresses both workplace conditions and support systems for our older workers. This cannot be dealt with in silos - we need an integrated approach."



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

“Workplace adaptations must be grounded in medical evidence to effectively support the physical and psychological well-being of Malta’s older workforce, including the critical need for adequate recovery and leisure time to prevent burnout and maintain cognitive health.”





5.2.16. HON. MALCOLM PAUL AGIUS GALEA | PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR ACTIVE AGEING

Parliamentary Secretary for Active Ageing, Hon. Malcolm Paul Agius Galea, drawing on his dual expertise as a medical practitioner and policymaker, emphasised an ageing workforce's crucial public health dimensions. His intervention explored the intricate connections between occupational health, mental well-being, and long-term sustainable employment for older workers in Malta's evolving labour market. From his experience as a general practitioner, he stressed the importance of preventive healthcare approaches and robust workplace health promotion programmes in making extended working lives feasible and beneficial. The Parliamentary Secretary emphasised that quality leisure time and work-life balance were not merely lifestyle choices but essential medical considerations for older workers' health outcomes.

"Workplace adaptations must be grounded in medical evidence to effectively support the physical and psychological well-being of Malta's older workforce, including the critical need for adequate recovery and leisure time to prevent burnout and maintain cognitive health."



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

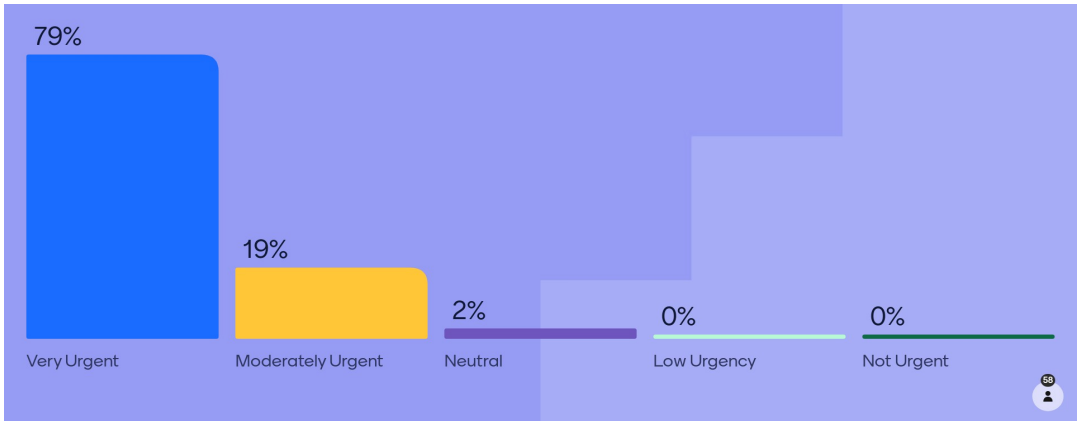
A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

“If people want to, if people are still strong enough, if people are capable to and would like to show their experience to the new comers, why not? The employers should be pleased that they have the chance to have experts at work.”



Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



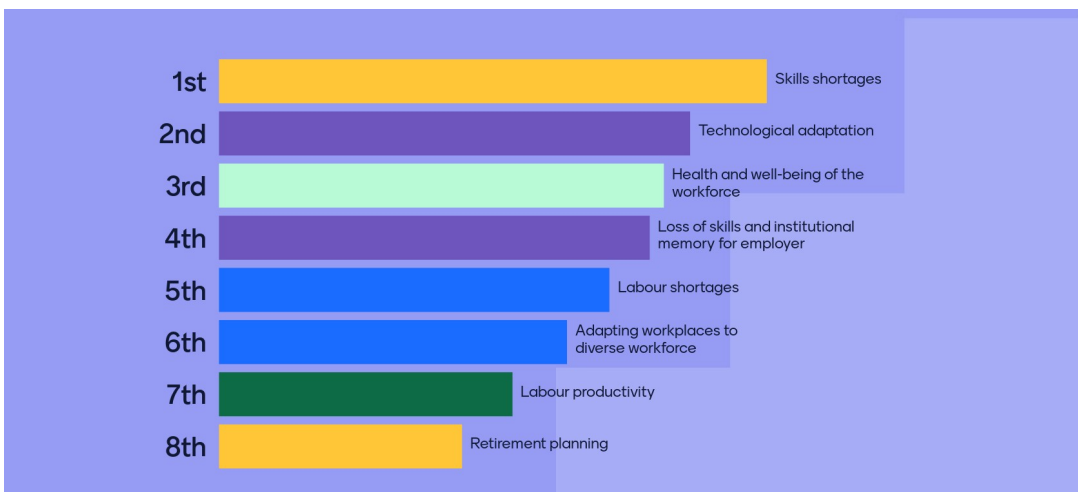
2. How urgent is it for Malta to address this matter?

- 79% of respondents rated the issue as Very Urgent.
- 19% of respondents considered it as Moderately Urgent.

3. Participants were asked to rank the following challenges related to an ageing workforce in accordance to significance (Skills shortages, Technological adaptation, Health and well-being of the workforce, Loss of skills and institutional memory for employers, Labour shortages, Adapting workplaces to diverse workforce, Labour productivity and Retirement planning)

Top Issues Identified:

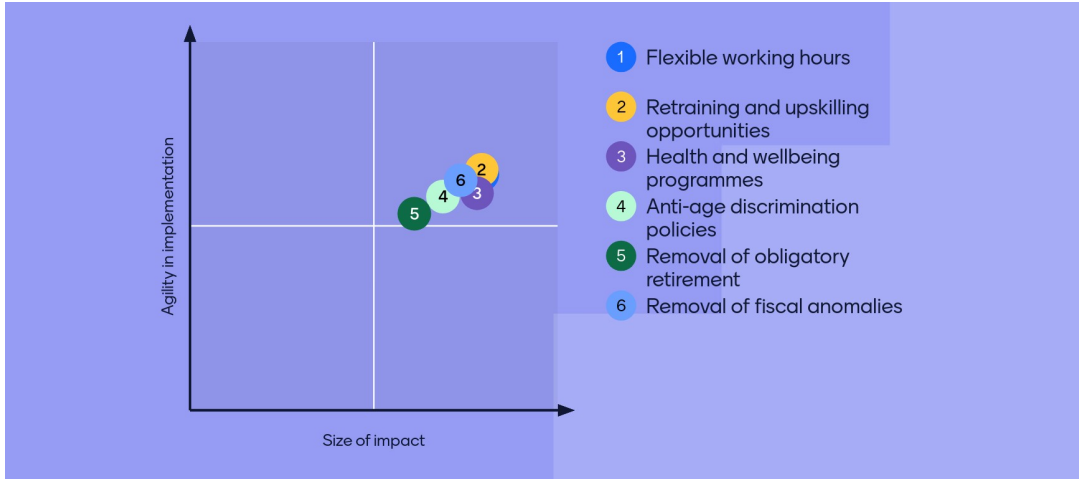
- Labour shortages, skills shortages and loss of skills and institutional memory for employers were the most frequently highlighted concerns, with these items receiving the highest rankings.
- Technological adaptation and health and well-being of the workforce also emerged as key priorities, indicating a need to focus on adapting technology and improving worker health.





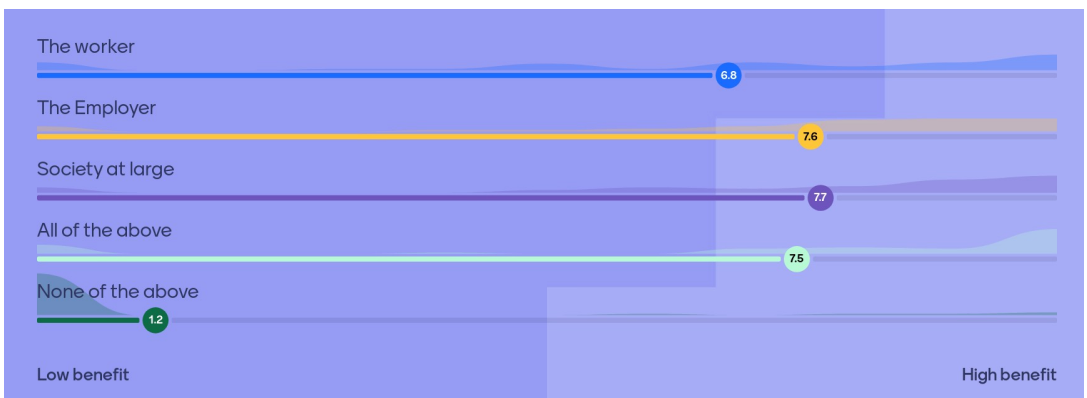
4. Which policies would be most effective in supporting older workers to remain active?

The policy with the greatest impact and agility was deemed to be 'Retraining and upskilling opportunities', followed closely by 'Flexible working hours'.



5. Who benefits from the proposal to extend the contribution of workers beyond retirement age on a voluntary basis and what is the level of benefit?

Hereby, participants believed that the largest cohort to benefit from this policy change would be society at large.



6. Your main takeaway today...

- Many respondents believe in the value of older employees and suggest adjusting policies to enable them to continue working voluntarily.
- Tax incentives for working pensioners, flexible work arrangements, and extended retirement age for certain sectors.
- Pension adequacy is a recurring concern, with calls for ensuring pensions are sustainable even if individuals continue to work beyond retirement.
- There's an urgent need for policy changes to benefit employers, employees, and society. For example, increasing the retirement threshold or providing incentives to remain employed without losing pension benefits.
- The importance of reskilling and upskilling programs to support older workers is highlighted. Providing necessary training can help older workers remain relevant in the workforce.
- Intergenerational dialogue and collaboration between younger and older employees are suggested to create a more cohesive work environment.
- There are calls for more flexible work frameworks to accommodate ageing workers, including hybrid work options and adjusting the workplace environment.
- Integrating older workers through cultural adaptations and providing physical, psychological, and social workplace interventions.
- Respondents recognise the multi-faceted nature of ageing as a challenge that impacts not just businesses but society as a whole. Addressing this will require structural reforms, mindset changes, and stakeholder collaboration.
- There's also a focus on raising awareness of the value that older individuals can bring if provided with the proper support.
- There's a consensus on the need for immediate action from authorities and policy-makers to address the challenges of an ageing workforce. This includes creating a permanent multidisciplinary group to address these issues.
- The mental health and well-being of older workers are highlighted, stressing the importance of maintaining a work-life balance and providing support as they transition into new stages of life.

The feedback indicates a strong recognition of the value older workers bring but also highlights significant areas where policy, training, and workplace practices need to evolve. There's a clear call to action for immediate reforms to integrate ageing individuals into the workforce better, leveraging their experience while ensuring their well-being.



| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Different points of view | Retain employees beyond retirement age | Hopefully tangible outcomes | Pension adequacy and sustainability |
| Prosit - all critical stakeholders brought in the same room | Immediate acrion | Pension adquacy beyond retirement | Urgent need for policy changes which promise to benefit employer, employee and society |
| Do not ignore An aging population which may contribute to the society at large. | Right mindset | An interesting overview of the local context, highlighting the shortcomings and what else needs to be done. | Ensuring workplace is organised to create pathways for aging worfirce and younger workers |
| Intergenerational dialogue | Necessary training and support | Useful update re Active Ageing and clear agreement on TIME TO ACT | facts on the current demodraphic situation and what's round the corner.Very useful interventions from the panel |

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

common vision based on a common concern

More awareness Valued recommendations

Definitely a well organised and productive conference which offers critical proposals to policy makers.

Further consideration towards the rest of the social security act needs to be given - specifically as to what it means to increase the 65 year threshold.

The govt to offer improved incentives for people to remain in employment without losing out on their pension.

Should maximize their full potential if they are willing to continue working by making necessary adjustments

The importance of giving enough training and security to the ageing generation to continue working beyond pension age

Pension age not retirement age

Retirement may be extended to certain sectors

Frameworks to be flexible

Time is ticking ...

We need a permanent multidisciplinary group to address this

Maintaining flexible mindset

Key lesson - work life balance is imperative when considering retirement, lifestyle afterwards and the mental health of the worker. The formula is definitely not a one size for all.

Refining my ideas on what changes I can implement in my workplace. And a deeper understanding not only of the issue but also its urgency.

Very interesting topic. I agree that there should be more assistance to the elderly and leave them decide if they want to continue working or not.



The importance of voluntary retirement and to have a structured system in place that facilitates rather than takes away the human choice in this regard.

Bringing together both major parties and key stakeholders to listen and hear each other and hopefully resulting in a bipartisan multi-stakeholder way forward.

Working pensioners should have tax incentives.

The importance of planning and preparing tomorrow's workforce: the key skills required for the employment and pension age.

Employers need to give more attention to the needs of the elderly because they need them not to retire.

Organised reskilling and upskilling programmes.

Older persons are a valuable resource if the possibility is given with increased flexibility, support—financial and otherwise—to keep their gainful employment.

Re-training of employees.

Ageing is a multifaceted issue challenging society, policy, regulation and business to adapt. Now we have the challenge to adapt to today but also to be proactive.

Greater all-round awareness that non-retirement or early retirement remain. Personal choice and very much dependent on the area of work or profession.

Very interesting and relevant topics to this day and time. Many highlighted the problems that employers are faced with when it comes to retaining valuable employees who are reaching pensionable age.

Start early on coming up with policies and procedures to enhance voluntary work after retirement age.

It is important to consider the individual cause: not all elderly have the same physical, psychological and type of work. We need to consider the birth rate challenge and our productivity.

Integrating the old age community in our labour force through upskilling, adaptation of work environment & cultural attitudes towards the ageing population as well as providing incentives & tax benefits.

Very interesting views.

Very good idea of the hybrid conference. I would have missed it otherwise.

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The high level areas to be tackled are clear. These now need to be validated using data and also forecasting impacts to avoid perverse /unintended outcomes

Staying in employment depends very much on the industry they work in

Very important event with all important stakeholder.s well done

The importance of workplace interventions, physical, technological, psychological and social to maximise older worker integration in the work environment and maximise productivity potential

The importance of retaining elderly people in the workforce while appreciating the changes that one goes through as we age.

Close collaboration between different age groups as their should be one common objective

Well done on the excellent event

Changing mindsets across the board. Reduce bureaucratic measures and increase flexibility

Multi-faceted approach needed: growth mindset, structural reforms, wellbeing aspects, intergenerational collaboration, amongst the most important areas to be addressed

Several challenges brought by ageing. It was great place to bring them up. Best way forward to suggest ways to address them and bring to attention to politicians

Action needed by authorities

Well done MEA

Very interesting , sometimes we take everthing for granted and we dont think what benefits can be for the individual and employer when employed someone with age

Flexible ageing pathways



5.4 MAIN EMERGING THEMES

Throughout the national round table session, various views were received by different parties, stakeholders and constituted bodies.

Key Points:

1. **Changing Mentality:** All stakeholders emphasise the need for a change in mentality regarding how retirement is perceived and planned for in society. The MUBE suggests that this change should start from home and be supported by the education system.
2. **Flexible Work Arrangements:** MUBE and GWU both highlighted the importance of implementing flexible work arrangements for older workers, such as part-time work, remote work, reduced hours, and job-sharing schemes.
3. **Training and Upskilling:** All stakeholders stress the significance of providing targeted training programs, digital literacy courses, and ongoing upskilling opportunities to help older workers adapt to rapidly changing industries and technologies.
4. **Health and Well-being:** MUBE and Mr Arthur Muscat underscore the importance of promoting health and well-being initiatives for older workers, such as wellness programmes, ergonomic workspaces, and mental health support.
5. **Intergenerational Collaboration:** The GWU and GBC emphasise the need for fostering intergenerational collaboration and knowledge sharing between older and younger workers.
6. **Retirement Planning:** the importance of providing resources and education on retirement planning, including financial education and retirement courses is amply highlighted.
7. **Government Policies and Incentives:** All stakeholders call for government policies and incentives, such as tax breaks, subsidies, and anti-discrimination laws, to support businesses in hiring and retaining older workers.
8. **Regional Challenges:** Daniel Borg's speech focuses on the specific challenges faced by Gozo, an island region of Malta. These include a higher percentage increase in the elderly population and the need for tailored solutions to address the ageing workforce in sectors such as tourism and construction.

5.4.1 OVERARCHING CONCLUSIONS

The stakeholders emphasised that adapting Malta's labour market to an ageing population requires a comprehensive strategy across multiple dimensions. This includes transforming societal attitudes, implementing flexible work arrangements, and developing targeted upskilling programs. Health and wellness emerged as a central theme, with successful examples of workplace modifications and flexible scheduling demonstrating improved retention and productivity among older workers.

Financial frameworks require careful consideration, with employers proposing various government incentives, including subsidies and tax relief programs, to support businesses in retaining older workers. Public-private partnerships were suggested to implement workplace adaptations and training programs. Regional considerations must be integrated into any national strategy, particularly for Gozo.

The research and stakeholder insights point to significant opportunities in leveraging an ageing workforce, provided appropriate support systems and policies are implemented. This calls for coordinated action across government, business, and social sectors to create an age-inclusive labour market that benefits all generations.

**YOUR
PURPOSE
IS YOUR
BIGGEST
ASSET**

6. Media

PRINT MEDIA

Promotion of 'silver jobs' of paramount importance and may ease burden on economy – MEA



ANDREA CARUANA

A National Round Table Forum organised by the Malta Employers Association on Wednesday tackled the issue of an aging population, as well as the demographic shift of the workforce towards older employees. Addressing the event, MEA President, Joanne Bondin, said that an aging workforce and the skills shortage spanning the whole economy are issues of "paramount importance", and that the promotion of senior employment is not only a necessity but a strategic advantage, since it can decrease the need for foreign labour which is "not sustainable".

She said that "silver jobs" are "central" to this strategy, and that the experience of the aging workforce accumulated over years cannot be wasted, but injected into businesses to retain knowledge.

Bondin said that as a country an "adaptive approach" must be taken to address the demographic shift of the workforce, and that Government initiatives must be enforced to ensure long-term success. She concluded by saying that the aging population is not a "challenge to be overcome", rather, an opportunity that should be embraced, since it can lead to a more stable and inclusive

labour market with a thriving workforce despite demographic changes.

Director General of the MEA, Kevin J. Borg, stressed that the aging population is not "just another research topic" but a "pressing issue that demands our direct attention", with action being necessary and urgent. He said that the ultimate goal of the round table conference was to share ideas for lasting and workable solutions for the aging Maltese population to shape the future of the labour market that may then be put into one document.

Borg said that early retirement must be discouraged before clarifying the MEA's stance on the promotion of work past the retirement age, stressing that it proposes this on a voluntary basis. He said that this may be done through the promotion of part-time 'silver jobs' facilitated by job-sharing and telecomm accommodations.

Borg said that apart from tax incentives for 'silver jobs', current "fiscal anomalies" must be "ironed out" as they are discouraging to the workers. He said that awareness must be raised on the importance of 'silver jobs', as well as the promotion of life-long learning, so that older workers will not feel "irrelevant to their younger colleagues".

On the other hand, Borg gave importance to the workplace



Photo by Mario Mintoff

conditions for employees bolstered by employer incentives for an ergonomic workplace, since it was found that older workers tend to retire earlier due to physical conditions caused by poor ergonomics.

JobsPlus CEO, Celia Falzon, said that though Malta has a higher life expectancy than the rest of the EU, the Maltese work-age bracket is lower than the EU average, chiefly due to the traditional disparity between the genders, with fewer female workers, since they are only recently joining the labour market.

Falzon agreed with Borg's view on the raising of awareness pointing out that an open call for the Mentorship Pro-

gramme at JobsPlus remains with only one mentor available. She said that JobsPlus offers tax deductions and subsidies for employers who take older workers on board, as well as free training services to keep up life-long learning.

Falzon said that the MEA's proposals must be "delved into further", and noted that the market must make use of what is already available, and make it more accessible. She pointed out that a change in culture is "crucial", stressing that persons around 50 years of age are not "useless" due to the perception that changing jobs is difficult, meaning that they are anxious that they will not find new employment. She added that the

health of the workforce must be given importance "from day one" since it will eventually lead to a healthier older workforce.

Identità CEO, Steve Agius, echoed Borg's sentiment on local workforce planning, and stressed that the approach to the workforce cannot be "one size fits all". He said that entities must collaborate more, for example, through data-sharing to make workforce forecasts, especially in the construction sector. He added that those sectors requiring a skill set need most attention, and stressed the use of models in policy-making to steer towards evidence-based decision making.

Galea said that despite the 65 years retirement age, if people are strong enough, the elderly should still be allowed to work, adding that employers should be pleased to have such experience in their business that can be passed on in practice to the younger workers. He added that he cannot see employers "saying no" to older workers.

Keith Bartolo from the OPM pointed out the responsibility of employers to respect the wish of employees who wish to retire and help them transition to a new, healthy life outside the workforce. He also pointed out that older employees have additional issues to their younger counterparts, chiefly care-giving despite free childcare and active aging services.

PRINT MEDIA

Promotion of 'silver jobs' of paramount importance and may ease burden on economy – MEA

ANDREA CARUANA

A National Round Table Forum organised by the Malta Employers Association on Wednesday tackled the issue of an aging population as well as the demographic shift of the workforce towards older employees.

Addressing the event, MEA President Joanne Bondin said that an aging workforce and the skill shortage spanning the whole economy are issues of "paramount importance" and that the promotion of senior employment is not only a necessity but a strategic advantage since it can decrease the need for foreign labour which is "not sustainable".

She said that "silver jobs" are "central" to this strategy and the experience of the aging workforce accumulated over years cannot be wasted but injected into businesses to retain knowledge.

Bondin said that as a country an "adaptive approach" must be taken to address the demographic shift of the workforce and that government initiatives must be enforced to ensure long-term success. She concluded by saying that the aging population is not a "challenge to be overcome"; rather, an opportunity that should be embraced since it can lead to a more stable and inclusive labour market with a thriving workforce despite demographic changes.

Director General of the MEA Kevin J. Borg stressed that the aging population is not "just another research topic" but a "pressing issue that demands our direct attention" with action being necessary and urgent. He said that the ultimate goal of the round table conference was to share ideas for lasting and workable solutions for the aging Maltese population to shape the future of the labour market that may then be put into one document.

Borg said that early retirement must be discouraged before clarifying the MEA's stance on the promotion of work past the retirement age, stressing that it proposes this on a voluntary basis. He said that this may be done through the promotion of part-time 'silver jobs' facilitated by job-sharing and telecom accommodations.

Borg said that apart from tax incentives



Photo: Mario Mintoff

for 'silver jobs', current "fiscal anomalies" must be "ironed out" as they are discouraging to the workers. He said awareness must be raised on the importance of 'silver jobs' as well as the promotion of life-long learning so that older workers will not feel "irrelevant to their younger colleagues".

On the other hand, Borg gave importance to the workplace conditions for employees bolstered by employer incentives for an ergonomic workplace since it was found that older workers tend to retire earlier due to physical conditions caused by poor ergonomics.

JobsPlus CEO Celia Falzon said that though Malta has a higher life expectancy than the rest of the EU, the Maltese wage bracket is lower than the EU average chiefly due to the traditional disparity between the genders, with fewer female workers, since they are only recently joining the labour market, meaning that attention must be paid to future findings.

Falzon said agreed with Borg's view on the raising of awareness pointing out that an open call for the Mentorship Programme at JobsPlus remains with only one mentor available. She said that JobsPlus offers tax deductions and subsidies for employers who take older workers on board, as well as free training services to keep up life-long learning.

Falzon said the MEA's proposals must be "delved into further" and noted that the market must make use of what is already available and make it more accessible. She pointed out that a change in culture is "crucial", stressing that persons around 50

years of age are not "useless" due to the perception of that changing jobs is difficult, meaning that they are anxious that they will not find new employment. She added that the health of the workforce must be given importance "from day 1" since it will eventually lead to a healthier older workforce.

Identita' CEO Steve Agius echoed Borg's sentiment on local workforce planning and stressed that the approach to the workforce cannot be "one size fits all". He said that entities must collaborate more for example, through data-sharing to make workforce forecasts especially in the construction sector. He added that those sectors requiring a skill set need most attention and stressed the use of models in policy-making to steer towards evidence-based decision making.

Galea said that despite the 65 years retirement age, if people are strong enough, the elderly should still be allowed to work, adding that employers should be pleased to have such experience in their business that can be passed on in practice to the younger workers. He added that he cannot see employers "saying no" to older workers.

Keith Bartolo from the OPM pointed out the responsibility of employers to respect the wish of employees who wish to retire and help them transition to a new, healthy life outside the workforce. He also pointed out that older employees have additional issues to their younger counterparts, chiefly care-giving despite free childcare and active aging services.

DIGITAL MEDIA

The screenshot shows the homepage of The Malta Independent. The main article is titled "Promotion of 'silver jobs' of paramount importance and may ease burden on economy - MEA". The author is Andrea Caruana, and it was published on Wednesday, 9 October 2024. The article features a photograph of an elderly woman working at a desk with a laptop. To the right of the article is a BOV mobilePOS advertisement with a "CONTACT US" button. Below the main article is a "don't miss" section with a sub-headline "Calls for new judges and magistrates to be issued, Justice".

The Malta Independent
<https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2024-10-09/local-news/Promotion-of-silver-jobs-of-paramount-importance-and-may-ease-burden-on-economy-MEA-6736264753>
 9 October, 2024

The screenshot shows a video report on the NET News website. The title is "L-anzjanità attiva fil-post tax-xogħol hi opportunità u vantagg għall-ekonomija Maltija - L-MEA". The video shows a woman speaking in front of a presentation slide titled "Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population" by the NATIONAL ROUND TABLE LOCAL. The video player includes a play button, a "Watch later" option, and a "Share" icon. To the right of the video is a sidebar with "AKTA" and other news items like "Erba' sul midrubba f'Israel" and "Gaza: Re izraeljan".

NET News
<https://netnews.com.mt/2024/10/09/l-anzjanita-attiva-fil-post-tax-xoghol-hi-opportunita-u-vantagg-għall-ekonomija-maltija-l-mea/>
 9 October, 2024

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

DIGITAL MEDIA

The screenshot shows the Newsbook Malta website. The main article is titled "L-MEA tenfasizza l-benefiċċji strateġiċi ta' impjieg għall-anzjani fis-suq tax-xogħol" (L-MEA emphasizes strategic benefits of employment for the elderly in the labor market). The author is Maria Daniela Camilleri, and the article is dated 9 October 2024. A large image shows four people in a meeting. To the right, there is a section for "AKTAR ARTIKLI" (More Articles) with three items: "Bil-Filmat: L-Ambaxxatriċi Maltija b'dehra mhux tas-soltu" (By Filmmat: The Maltese Ambassador with an unusual twist), "Festa ta' San Pubju f'Għenna ta' Gonna" (St. Publius Festival in Għenna ta' Gonna), and "L-MHRA imhassa bin-nuqqas ta' viżjoni fit-tmexxija tal-pajjiż" (The MHRA highlights the lack of vision in the country's management).

Newsbook (MT)

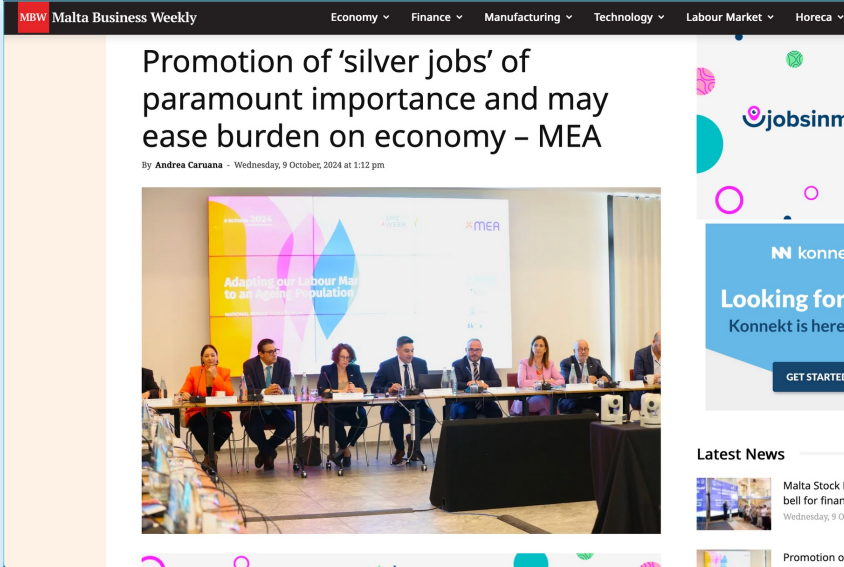
<https://newsbook.com.mt/l-mea-tenfasizza-l-beneficji-strategici-ta-impjieg-għall-anzjani-fis-suq-tax-xogħol/>
9 October, 2024

The screenshot shows the MaltaCEOs.mt website. The main article is titled "Inclusion of senior workers is an opportunity and a strategic advantage for Malta, stakeholders say". The author is Nicole Zammit, and the article is dated 9 October 2024. A large image shows four people in a meeting. The article text states: "MEAs groups all national stakeholders at its National Round Table Forum for a multi-disciplinary discussion focusing on Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population." Below the main text, there is a "Spotlight" section featuring Joao Carlos Rente Correia, Chief Operating Officer of The Commercial Bank of Malta.

Malta CEOs

<https://maltaceos.mt/inclusion-of-senior-workers-is-an-opportunity-and-a-strategic-advantage-for-malta-stakeholders-say/>
9 October, 2024

DIGITAL MEDIA



The screenshot shows the Malta Business Weekly website. The main article is titled "Promotion of 'silver jobs' of paramount importance and may ease burden on economy – MEA" by Andrea Caruana, dated Wednesday, 9 October, 2024 at 1:12 pm. The article features a photograph of a round table discussion with several participants seated around a long table. A large screen in the background displays the text "Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population" along with logos for MEA and other organizations. To the right of the article, there is a sidebar with a "jobsinm" logo, a "konnek" logo with the text "Looking for Konnekt is here t" and a "GET STARTED" button, and a "Latest News" section with a snippet about the Malta Stock Exchange.

Malta Business Weekly
<https://maltabusinessweekly.com/promotion-of-silver-jobs-of-paramount-importance-and-may-ease-burden-on-economy-mea/27150/>
9 October, 2024



The screenshot shows an article on The Dispatch website. The article title is "Inclusion Of Senior Workers Is An Opportunity And A Strategic Advantage For Malta, Stakeholders Say". It is dated 10th October 2024 and has a reading time of 3 minutes. The article features a photograph of a round table discussion with participants seated around a table, similar to the one in the Malta Business Weekly screenshot. The Dispatch logo and navigation menu are visible at the top. Below the article title, there is a breadcrumb trail: Home > News > Malta > Inclusion of senior workers is an opportunity and a strategic advantage for Malta, stakeholders say. A "Reading Time: 3 minutes" indicator is present. At the bottom, there is a language selection dropdown menu and a note "Powered by Google Translate". A caption at the very bottom reads: "MEA groups all national stakeholders at its National Round Table Forum for a multi-disciplinary discussion focusing on Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population".

The Dispatch | CDE News
<https://maltabusinessweekly.com/promotion-of-silver-jobs-of-paramount-importance-and-may-ease-burden-on-economy-mea/27150/>
10 October, 2024

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

BRANDING/SUPPORTING MEDIUMS



Backdrop



Facebook Cover



LinkedIn Cover

BRANDING/SUPPORTING MEDIUMS

9 OCTOBER 2024
maltaemployers.com

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

NATIONAL ROUND TABLE FORUM

ORGANISED BY
MEA
MALTA EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION

IN CONJUNCTION WITH
GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR THE ECONOMY
ENTERPRISE AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS

IN COLLABORATION WITH

Assocjazzz Attiva u Korra Bi Komunita
Active Ageing & Community Care

Malta
NSO
National Statistics Office
Uffizju Nazzjonali tal-Statistika

FAMILY
BUSINESS OFFICE

NATIONAL
Skills
COUNCIL

jobplus

identità

Programme of Event

9 OCTOBER 2024
maltaemployers.com

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

NATIONAL ROUND TABLE FORUM

ORGANISED BY
MEA
MALTA EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION

IN CONJUNCTION WITH
GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR THE ECONOMY
ENTERPRISE AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS

IN COLLABORATION WITH

Assocjazzz Attiva u Korra Bi Komunita
Active Ageing & Community Care

Malta
NSO
National Statistics Office
Uffizju Nazzjonali tal-Statistika

FAMILY
BUSINESS OFFICE

NATIONAL
Skills
COUNCIL

jobplus

identità

Website Banner

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK AND LINKEDIN)

The image displays a grid of 12 social media posts, likely from Facebook and LinkedIn, related to the event "Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population". The posts are organized into three rows and four columns. Each post features a central graphic with the event title and a grid of speaker portraits. The speakers mentioned include Joanne Bondin, Hon. Silvio Schramm, Director General, MEA; Elinora Caruana, Director General, NSO; Kirsten Cutajar Miller, Consultant, NSO; Cynthia Formosa, Manager Head Office, Active Ageing & Community Care at Ministry for Health & Active Ageing; Grazia Barbara, Director General, Social Security; Steve Agius, CEO, Identia; Celia Falcon, CEO, Jobplus; Prof. Martin Formosa, Expert in Gerontology & Dementia Studies, Faculty for Social Wellbeing; William Portelli, President, MAE; Paul Abela, President, Malta Chamber of SMEs; David Spiteri Gatt, Responsible Expert for the implementation of the 2017-2019 Retirement and Financial Capability Strategy; Josell Vella, CEO, UHM; Diane Vella Muscat, Director General, Department for Industrial and Employment Relations; Kevin Vella, Director General, Economic Policy, Department - Ministry for Finance & Employment; Daniel Borg, CEO, Gozo Business Chamber; Christine-Ann Dessey; and Joanne Bondin - President, MEA.

The posts include details such as the date (9 October 2024), the event name (SME Week Malta 2024), and the location (National Round Table Forum). Some posts also include text updates, such as the one from 9 October at 09:22, which states: "Good morning! We've just kicked off proceedings at the National Round Table Forum: Adapting Our Labour Market to an Ageing Population. We look forward to a dynamic and insightful discussion on the critical challenges facing Malta's labour market. Today, stakeholders from across the economy will share their perspectives and explore actionable solutions to adapt to our evolving demographic landscape. This event is being organised in conjunction of the Ministry for the Economy...".

Each post also features a "Boost post" button and a "Boost post to reach up to 2551 more people if you spend €14." prompt. The posts are attributed to the Malta Employers Association - MEA.

SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK AND LINKEDIN)

Malta Employers Association - MEA
9 October at 09:47

Kevin J Borg, Director General of the Malta Employers Association, shared a number of proposals that the MEA has put forward to encourage people to continue working beyond retirement age on a voluntary basis. These include flexible work options, such as part-time roles, job sharing, and telecommuting, the addressing of fiscal anomalies to make work more rewarding for older workers, including through tax incentives, the promotion of lifelong learning, and improvements to work... See more

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population
NATIONAL ROUND TABLE FORUM

KEVIN J. BORG
DIRECTOR GENERAL MEA

BOOSTED BY MEA, NSO, Skills, Identita

Boost this post to reach up to 2551 more people if you spend €14. [Boost post](#)

1

Malta Employers Association - MEA
6 days ago

Cynthia Formosa - Manager Head Office, Active Ageing & Community Care, Ministry for Health & Active Ageing

*Active ageing is a multi-dimensional concept, and older workers play a vital role in society. Reskilling is essential not only for continued employment but also for staying connected and integrated within the community. It enables individuals to access services, enjoy entertainment, and maintain a sense of belonging. Lifelong learning, mentoring roles, and age-friendly... See more

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population
NATIONAL ROUND TABLE FORUM

CYNTHIA FORMOSA
MANAGER HEAD OFFICE, ACTIVE AGEING & COMMUNITY CARE, MINISTRY FOR HEALTH & ACTIVE AGEING

BOOSTED BY MEA, NSO, Skills, Identita

Boost this post to reach up to 2551 more people if you spend €14. [Boost post](#)

Keith Zahra and 1 other

Malta Employers Association - MEA
6 days ago

Hon. Paula Mifsud Bonnici, Shadow Minister for Active Ageing

*Older workers often face discrimination in the labour market, becoming the first to experience economic inactivity. Given Malta's increasing population, it's crucial to review policies that promote their employment. We must take actionable steps to eliminate this discrimination and encourage older workers to participate, as Malta cannot afford to lose their invaluable wisdom and expertise". National Round Table F... See more

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population
NATIONAL ROUND TABLE FORUM

HON. PAULA MIFSUD BONNICI
SHADOW MINISTER FOR ACTIVE AGEING

BOOSTED BY MEA, NSO, Skills, Identita

Boost this post to reach up to 2551 more people if you spend €14. [Boost post](#)

7

Malta Employers Association - MEA
6 days ago

Hon. Malcolm Paul Agius Galea, Parliamentary Secretary for Active Ageing, highlighted three fundamental elements in the ongoing discussion: healthcare, time and skills. He emphasised the need to prioritise the health of workers at every stage of their careers and insisted that flexible working arrangements are essential. He pointed out that different strategies are required for the re-integration of older workers, underscoring the importance of creating training and superviso... See more

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population
NATIONAL ROUND TABLE FORUM

HON. MALCOLM PAUL AGIUS GALEA
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR ACTIVE AGEING

BOOSTED BY MEA, NSO, Skills, Identita

Boost this post to reach up to 2551 more people if you spend €14. [Boost post](#)

4

Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK AND LINKEDIN)

Malta Employers Association - MEA
6 days ago

Following the earlier presentations, the Round Table Forum continues with the first round-robin discussion, featuring various experts in the field namely Dianne Vella Muscat (DG Department for Industrial and Employment Relations, Grazia Barbara (DG Social Security), Kevin Vella (DG Economic Policy Department – Ministry for Finance & Employment), Dr Luke Fiorini (Director, Centre for Labour Studies) and Keith Bartolo, Principal of the Institute for the Public Services (IPS). See more



Boost this post to reach up to 2551 more people if you spend €14. [Boost post](#)

4

Malta Employers Association - MEA
6 days ago

More insights and perspectives at the MEA's National Round Table Forum with the second round table discussion this morning, featuring Josef Bugaja (Secretary General of the General Workers Union), Arthur Muscat (Honorary President of the MEA), Adrian J Galea (DG Insurance Association Malta), Perit David Xuereb (Chairman of the MCESD) and Kenneth Delia, CEO at Hospice Malta.

National Round Table Forum: Adapting Our Labour Market to an Ageing Population




Boost this post to reach up to 2551 more people if you spend €14. [Boost post](#)

4 1 share

Malta Employers Association - MEA
6 days ago

Offering insights beyond the labour market, the National Round Table Forum hosted by the MEA, continued with presentations by Professor Marvin Farnosa, an expert in Gerontology and Dementia Studies at the Faculty for Social Well-Being, and Dr Patrick Barbara, a consultant psychiatrist.

National Round Table Forum: Adapting Our Labour Market to an Ageing Population




Boost this post to reach up to 2551 more people if you spend €14. [Boost post](#)

4 1 share

Malta Employers Association - MEA
6 days ago

The fourth and final round of interventions brought together representatives from Malta's major social partners, including Josef Vella (UHM), William Portelli (MUSE), Marthess Portelli (The Malta Chamber), Daniel Borg (Gozo Business Chamber), Paul Abela (Chamber of SMEs) and Chris Attard (For.U.M.).

National Round Table Forum: Adapting Our Labour Market to an Ageing Population



Boost this post to reach up to 2551 more people if you spend €14. [Boost post](#)

4 1 share



7. Outcomes and Recommendations

Our comprehensive framework for addressing Malta's ageing workforce challenges emerges from extensive stakeholder consultations, conference proceedings, and statistical analysis. These recommendations reflect the urgency of the demographic transition and the complexity of required responses across multiple sectors and stakeholder groups.

DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT AND URGENCY

The demographic data presented by the NSO demonstrates the scale of Malta's coming workforce transformation. With the working-age population projected to fall from 63.2% in 2022 to 51.5% by 2070, immediate and sustained action is essential. This urgency is further underscored by workforce forecasting presented by Identity Malta, which indicates a need for a 48.5% increase in workforce size by 2034 to meet economic demands. The overwhelming consensus from our National Round Table Forum, where 79% of stakeholders rated this issue as "Very Urgent," reinforces the need for immediate action.

RETIREMENT SYSTEM REFORM

The current retirement system requires fundamental reform to address the changing needs of both workers and employers. Drawing on Kevin Borg's and David Spiteri Gingell's analysis, **we recommend a flexible retirement framework to gradually transition from full-time work, including options for part-time roles, job-sharing and telecommuting. This system should incorporate actuarial benefits for delayed retirement and establish clear pathways for post-retirement employment.** The framework must balance individual choice with economic necessity, providing options for phased retirement while ensuring adequate income security for older workers.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES AND SUPPORT

The success of age-friendly workplace initiatives requires significant financial support and incentive structures. Building on the successful Mature Workers Scheme highlighted by Jobsplus CEO Celia Falzon, we recommend expanding existing programmes while developing new financial instruments to support workplace adaptation. These should include enhanced tax incentives for employers who implement age-friendly workplace modifications and targeted subsidies for training and upskilling programs.

Further, we recommend addressing fiscal anomalies in order to make work pay for older workers. The financial framework must be sustainable while providing meaningful support for employers and employees.

WORKPLACE TRANSFORMATION

Physical workplace environments must evolve to accommodate an ageing workforce effectively. Our stakeholder consultations revealed significant concerns about workplace safety and accessibility. **We recommend implementing comprehensive workplace assessment programmes addressing physical infrastructure and organisational practices.** This should include ergonomic modifications, enhanced accessibility features, and the creation of flexible workspaces that can accommodate varying physical capabilities.

The organisational structure of work itself must also adapt. Based on extensive feedback from our conference participants, **we recommend developing flexible working arrangements that include reduced-hour programs, job-sharing initiatives, and structured mentorship roles.** These changes should be supported by formal knowledge transfer systems to ensure critical skills and experience are preserved as workers transition to different roles or retire.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The skills gap identified in NSO data, particularly in digital literacy and technology adaptation, requires systematic intervention. **We recommend promoting and incentivising lifelong learning opportunities aimed at older employees.** We also recommend that comprehensive digital training programmes be established tailored specifically for older workers, with content and delivery methods adapted to their learning needs and preferences. These programs should be sector-specific where appropriate and supported by ongoing technical assistance to ensure sustained skill development.

It was also highlighted that the ageing workforce carries significant value in terms of skills gathered through informal and non-formal learning; in this regard, **we recommend a sustained effort to formally recognise these skills, allowing for the possibility of further learning progression and certification to be obtained.**

Multiple stakeholders have highlighted the critical challenge of knowledge transfer. The successful Mentorship Programme initiated by Jobsplus provides a foundation for expanded efforts in this area. We recommend developing structured knowledge documentation systems and creating formal cross-generational learning opportunities within organisations. These initiatives should be supported by industry-specific knowledge banks that preserve critical expertise.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING INTEGRATION

The health implications of extended working lives require comprehensive support systems. Healthcare providers at our conference emphasised the importance of preventive care and regular health monitoring. **We recommend implementing workplace health programs that combine regular health assessments with ergonomic training and preventive health initiatives.** These programs should be tailored to specific occupational requirements and supported by appropriate healthcare coverage.

Mental health emerged as a significant concern during our stakeholder meetings, particularly regarding presenteeism and work-related stress. **We recommend developing comprehensive mental health support systems that include counselling services, stress management programs, and work-life balance initiatives.** These should be complemented by social connection programs that help maintain employee engagement and well-being.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Our analysis reveals that different sectors of Malta's economy face distinct challenges and opportunities in adapting to an ageing workforce. As highlighted during our stakeholder meetings, the healthcare sector faces a unique double challenge. Not only must it manage its ageing workforce, but it must also meet increasing service demands from an ageing population. We recommend developing specialised flexible work arrangements for healthcare workers, enhanced ergonomic



support and targeted retention incentives. These measures should be integrated with knowledge transfer systems to preserve critical medical expertise.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The success of these recommendations depends on coordinated action across government and private sector stakeholders. Based on insights from policymakers at our National Round Table Forum, we recommend establishing a permanent cross-ministerial working group to coordinate implementation efforts. This group should oversee the development of necessary legislative frameworks, establish funding mechanisms, and create monitoring systems to track progress.

Private sector engagement must go beyond simple compliance with new requirements. Drawing from employer perspectives shared at our conference, we recommend creating industry-led working groups to develop sector-specific implementation guidelines and share best practices. These groups should facilitate pilot program participation and resource sharing, ensuring that successful approaches can be quickly identified and replicated.

MONITORING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The effectiveness of these initiatives must be rigorously monitored and evaluated. We recommend establishing comprehensive monitoring systems that track key performance indicators, including labour force participation rates, productivity measurements, and health and safety outcomes. These metrics should be regularly reviewed and used to adjust program designs and implementation strategies.

Stakeholder feedback mechanisms must be formalised and maintained throughout implementation. Regular consultation with employers, workers, and other stakeholders should inform continuous program improvement. Impact evaluation systems should be established to assess quantitative outcomes and qualitative improvements in workplace quality and worker well-being.

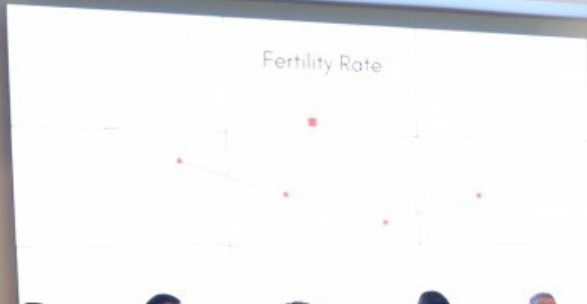
CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Beyond specific programs and policies, successfully adapting to an ageing workforce requires fundamental cultural change. The issue of ageism, raised repeatedly during our stakeholder consultations, must be systematically addressed. We recommend developing comprehensive awareness campaigns highlighting experienced workers' values and challenging age-based stereotypes. Diversity training programs and recognition systems for age-friendly employers should support these.

Work-life balance emerged as a critical concern, particularly regarding caring responsibilities for older workers. As highlighted by multiple conference participants, many workers in the 60-70 age group face competing demands from childcare, eldercare, and employment. We recommend developing flexible scheduling options and remote work opportunities that enable workers to balance these responsibilities. These should be supported by caregiver support programs and adapted leave arrangements that recognise the complex demands on older workers.



Fertility Rate





8. Conclusion

Malta stands at a critical juncture in addressing its ageing workforce challenges. Our comprehensive analysis reveals that demographic trends, economic necessities, and social changes demand immediate and sustained action across multiple fronts.

The success of this transformation will depend on coordinated efforts supported by clear monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This structural approach must be accompanied by a broader cultural transformation that addresses workplace ageism, promotes intergenerational collaboration, and recognises the value of experienced workers.

Sustainable support systems will be crucial, encompassing long-term funding mechanisms for workplace adaptation, ongoing training and development programs, and comprehensive health and wellbeing support. Regular stakeholder consultation with employers and workers must inform continuous program refinement and ensure shared responsibility for implementation.

The economic and social costs of inaction far exceed the investments required to implement these recommendations. By acting decisively now, Malta can position itself as a leader in adapting to demographic change while building a more inclusive and sustainable labour market.

Through careful action, Malta can build a workforce that capitalises on the wealth of experience and knowledge that older workers bring to the economy.

9. References

- Acemoglu, D. and Restrepo, P. (2017). Secular Stagnation? The Effect of Aging on Economic Growth in the Age of Automation. *American Economic Review*, 107(5), 174-179.
- Bloom, D.E., Canning, D. and Fink, G. (2010). Implications of population ageing for economic growth. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 26(4), 583-612.
- Central Bank of Malta. (2023). The Role of Foreign Workers in the Maltese Economy. Central Bank of Malta Publications.
- European Central Bank. (2022). Population ageing and the monetary transmission mechanism. *ECB Economic Bulletin*, Issue 5/2022.
- European Commission. (2021). The Silver Economy - Opportunities from Ageing. European Commission Publications.
- International Monetary Fund. (2016). The Impact of Workforce Aging on European Productivity. IMF Working Paper No. 16/238. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2016/wp16238.pdf>
- Ministry for Finance. (2024). 2024 Ageing Report, Malta Country Fiche. Retrieved from https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/8f7f03d1-fdf4-4992-925e-8d3c4629488e_en?filename=2024-ageing-report-country-fiche-Malta.pdf
- National Statistics Office Malta. (2023). Population Statistics (Revisions): 2012-2021. NSO Publications.
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2015). World Population Ageing. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WPA2015_Report.pdf
- Young, A.O. (2018). Economic Growth and Population Ageing in Nigeria: Innovation Accounting Techniques. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 11(4), 190-212.



10. Audio Visual Archives

Event Live Stream Part 1 - https://youtu.be/TFBjaf_NfhE

Event Live Stream Part 2 - <https://youtu.be/6VQf67KbY3M>

Event Live Stream Part 3 - <https://youtu.be/bRDjjUr70ao>

Promo Video <https://youtu.be/v3qks3WNLOg>

Theme Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qlj3b0xCMTk>

Post-Event Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2GihkicMPE>





35/1, South Street, Valletta VLT 1100, Malta
+356 21237 585/ 2122 2992 | admin@maltaemployers.com

www.maltaemployers.com