



# KSU Prebudget Reaction

KPS Economic Affairs Subcommittee

KSU welcomes the fact that the Maltese economy expanded by 2.1% in 2011, according to NSO, namely through pharmaceutical industry, gaming industry (which involves ICT, legal, financial), financial services and IT related activities, besides the maritime and aviation sectors and other institutions. This focus on these industries has been received well by KSU, which hopes that this focus will remain, without limiting other industries.

With regards to youth unemployment, taking into consideration the fact that the age bracket of 15-24 includes several young people aged 15, that are not looking for work, and those seeking full-time higher education, may indicate two factors, one of which is that there is a significant number of youth following full-time and part-time educational courses, whilst concern is also shown as the percentage may signify that there is a considerable number of idle early-school-leavers.

Giving that the government is committing itself to incentivising investment and enterprise, by putting mechanisms in place that will help making local economy resilient and in turn more innovative. This can give more opportunities to students. Also, KSU welcomes the fact that the government shall continue to assist local artists to exhibit their work in international venues and invest in schemes targeted for the





benefit of artists and cultural operators. This shall provide an opportunity for both domestic audiences and tourists to enjoy artistic and cultural programmes of the highest level en route to Valletta's hosting of the Capital Culture in 2018, and involving students in the long run. It is suggested that the Government and relevant authorities consult the University of Malta and make sure to work with students from all backgrounds.

KSU positively acclaims the results achieved in 2011 with regards to education in all levels, and hopes that this rhythm is maintained for the coming years. Participation rate in post-secondary school and tertiary level has improved significantly, thus government strives to further improve such rate by increasing the number of courses; working closely with the employment industry to ensure that required skills and competencies are being met; introducing new modalities of learning; implementing the MATSEC review and improving the MATSEC system; launching the College of Arts (focusing studies on artistic talents, whilst following compulsory academic subjects); increasing apprenticeship opportunities; strengthening the scholarship system; setting up of a national accreditation and licensing of further and higher education programmes and providers system; increase the participation rate of people with disabilities. Increasing mobility and providing fiscal incentives for voluntary/remunerated work linked to the field of study are also means by which Government aims to improve. These are all initiatives that KSU welcomes and augurs well for their result.





KSU feels that investment in Further and Higher Education are never enough and that University funding is to be maintained and increased. Stipends are also to be maintained given they are considered as an investment. The €1.2 million proposal for the development of a Centre for Research and Innovation in Agriculture and Environmental Management is a positive investment towards acquiring new knowledge. These are important incentives to Maltese students following Further and Higher Education.

With regards to Gozitan students, it is appreciated that the government will work to enhance opportunities for graduates through specialised jobs in Gozo and aim to defeat the double insularity. Initiatives that KSU welcomes are the eco-friendly high tech business park and the micro enterprises project proposed. KSU expects that these will create new opportunity for Gozitans in the financial, research and ICT industries and involve current students and fresh graduates.

To conclude, even though KSU is satisfied that investment in tertiary and further and higher education as well as in other educational structures has increased remarkably in the last years, KSU feels that further investment is needed, to enhance the standard of education at the University of Malta and other institutions. KSU reiterates that such investment in emerging areas such as innovation, will lead to a better qualified to a future working population, which will aid to attract investment towards the Maltese Islands.

