

## **Reaction to Pre Budget Document 2010**

KSU wishes to express its satisfaction at the fact that year after year the budget is seeing the government engage in a consultation process. KSU believes that the continued strengthening of a consultation process helps in leading to a budget which can truly best fit the aspirations and needs of all sectors of Maltese society.

As a student body KSU was greatly interested to see what the Pre Budget document had in store for students, more specifically University of Malta students. It is thus with deep regret and disappointment that KSU notes that the University of Malta is almost completely ignored within the Pre Budget Document and is only mentioned by name under the section relating to Gozo. KSU appreciates and applauds the government's work and goal in seeking to strengthen MCAST but at the same time this should not be done at the cost of the University of Malta. In this light, KSU urges for more consultation process directed specifically towards the education sector.

KSU is also concerned with the fact that the document, whilst being helpful as a study of the current situation and effectively pointing out several challenges which must be overcome, it fails to provide any solution which can be debated. KSU believes that whilst pointing out our challenges has its benefits, these benefits can only be reaped if a solution is found for the aforementioned difficulties. Moreover consideration should be given to the fact that the current global economic situation necessarily adversely affects students, with particular reference being made to students coming from low income families and the utility rates for Gozitan Students studying at the University of Malta.

KSU notes with great concern certain statements which seem to put into question the very value of a degree whilst seemingly not recognizing the fact that a higher education provides one with more than the opportunity of attaining a better job.

At the same time KSU is deeply satisfied at the continued recognition of the importance of life long learning and the clear direction for further investment in the field. KSU believes that such an investment is beneficial for the University of Malta and for the country at large.

Whilst KSU disagrees with the two approaches adopted in this document namely the employment approach and the earnings approach, at the same time KSU notes that the conclusion leaves room for a strengthening of the educational sector and the potential for a budget which could indeed benefit the University of Malta, its students and the country.

KSU is deeply satisfied that in no part within the document are tuition fees mentioned. KSU believes this to be yet another sign from the authorities towards a commitment of not introducing tuition fees. KSU appreciates that such a decision necessarily dictates a huge investment.

In keeping with the positive spirit of the consultation process KSU would like to put forward the following proposals for consideration. KSU urges a strengthening of investment in order to better the quality of the courses and to strengthen the field of research. KSU believes that steps have already been taken in this direction but at the same time KSU wishes to take this opportunity in order to encourage yet further steps, believing that such is an absolute necessity in order to achieve the level of excellence desired.

KSU also believes that the University of Malta should receive the adequate funding in adequate time in order to assure that the necessary investment can be made. KSU applauds the recent investments made by the government at the University of Malta whilst hoping, auguring and encouraging further infrastructural investment in order to continue bettering the university with particular reference to the Library, Science Laboratories, Faculty of the Built Environment and the

Faculty of Education. Similar to this spirit KSU wishes to propose that attention be dedicated to the notion of Quality Assurance. Whilst such has been mentioned in the past concrete steps towards its real achievement are still somewhat lacking. KSU believes that in the positive spirit of commitment towards education the government should devote attention on this field.

Moreover, KSU would also once again call for the introduction of a Trust Fund. This would allow for more private and direct investment directed towards University as such a structure allows for sufficient autonomy in the administration of the funds and in the purposes for which such funds are to be used.

Whilst it is positive that the notion of employability is entertained it is perhaps a let down to realize that no proposal comes out of all of this. KSU thus applauds the recognition of the problem and hopes that it will see a solution within the budget. KSU also believes in a system of tax benefits for new graduates which system would benefit both the graduates in terms of finance but more crucially and importantly would help in increasing their employability.

KSU believes that the pre-budget document could have better served to give a clearer picture of the current policy adopted for Higher Education in Malta. The document can be best described as a missed opportunity to spur a healthy and constructive discussion. At the same time there are within it the signs of a positive commitment and intention from the part of the government which if built upon within the budget document have the potential for a positive outcome.