

SOCIAL POLICY COMMISSION 18/19

Meeting #9

University of Malta, KSU Betsson Common Room

12th February 2019, 17:00

MINUTES

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner):

- 1) Approval of the agenda - *Approved nem con*
- 2) Approval of minutes – *Approved nem con*

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): For those who were not present at yesterday's meeting, the following was mentioned:

- Dr. Xuereb spoke about the prospect of introducing a metro system for the Maltese Islands. He explained ways how to connect Sliema, Valletta and the Three Cities by bridges enabling mobility through walking and cycling.
- Dr. Xuereb then moved onto his metro proposal. He explained that the current population is expanding rapidly as is the number of cars on the road. Before a solution is found for to connect Gozo by private car, it makes sense to invest into a mass transport system for Malta and later Gozo. This would rapidly increase the speed of travel and improve mobility. The proposal covers 2/3 of the Maltese population and 6/7 of the tourists visiting the islands.
- For every million invested the return is usually threefold. The revenue potential is also much larger with a metro system. The total project would cost around €3bn to create. There are also revenue opportunities from advertising and retail which would contribute greatly to the project payback period, such as the Malta-Gozo car tunnel.
- The effect of building close to the sea might entail more maintenance in risk-prone areas, with the chosen material being adequate for the proximity to sea water.
- The train tunnel is more economically efficient as it requires less space and is dug at one equal depth with the connection to the surface being done by escalators in the stations. A car tunnel needs large ramps which double its length and complicate its development. It is deemed to be a more sustainable, efficient and environmentally friendly mode of transport.

During yesterday's admin forum, various valid points were brought up:

- Lack of communication and transparency in general, which has partly led to students being informed at the last minute re the parking issue;
- Lack of communication prevails;
- A number of students mentioned that a general demonstration on the issue of transport should take place. It was also mentioned that the government should give permit to areas to be used for park and ride;



- There was a discussion relating to an underground (metro) being built. Other ideas (systems) were also mentioned;
- There was a discussion relating to the sending of a petition letter on communication to include students on boards and to adopt measures in writing to properly communicate these things; AND
- Students also mentioned other points such as that of providing better services for students travelling by bicycles such as shower facilities and lockers, especially in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

As usual, we will be using a focus group setting for today's KPS meeting.

Split into focus groups

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We can start with the first question. The group who discussed the question are to present the fruits of their discussion and then the other groups are free to comment on the points raised by the former group. The first question is:

“What is your stance regarding the lack of communication and transparency at the University, especially when it comes to announcing major issues such as the closure of car park 6?”

Naomi Bugre (Insite Malta): With regards to communication, taking the closure of Car Park 6 as an example, although we received an email, a text could have been sent as well to help. Timing was also an issue. Students should have been involved in the planning of the issue and KSU should have been informed beforehand. Had we been informed of such developments, we would have prepared accordingly. We also discussed that it would have been better had we received information as to how we can avoid parking problems rather than simply stating that certain parts of Car Park 6 will be closed due to upcoming developments. It would have been much more transparent had we been part of the process. For example, someone mentioned that the gym area is very muddy and full of water and that it is extremely inaccessible. Had KSU known before, we could have informed students what can be used to tackle parking problems. For example, the free bus passes could have been promoted beforehand and also a separate park and ride could have been extended from Pembroke to other areas.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): With regards to the Park and Ride, it was already in place from before. However, I completely agree that, had KSU known beforehand of such a situation, we could have promoted it more effectively.

Naomi Bugre (Insite Malta): I agree. All we are saying is that a Park and Ride system is available at Pembroke but there is no Park and Ride system in the South. Maybe it would have been easier for KSU to extend the areas and we could have been more involved in the whole process.





Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We are actually trying to work on that.

Naomi Bugre (Insite Malta): We understand that it is because you were not informed beforehand either. Had we all known before, it would have been so much easier for all of us to give our input.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Prior to the notice that parts of Car Park 6 will be closed for certain developments, we had already been working on this. However, it is not that easy to find parking spots for such an initiative. With this being said, we would like to thank you for your suggestions.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We will now move on to the next question:

“Do you think that a demonstration should take place to raise awareness regarding such parking issue at the University? If so, in what way?”

Katrina Farrugia (Betapsi): We agreed that no demonstration should take place with regards to the parking issues and that the Faculties will help our initiatives if we approach them. However, we do agree that a demonstration should be held with regards to the lack of communication between the students and the University of Malta. In the meantime, we should try to promote other means of transport and attempt to push for more bike lanes.

Luca Arrigo (ESN Malta): I agree that to protest on the parking issues should not be the way forward. I think that we should organise a demonstration supporting an initiative to find a long-term solution, which might bring the government to take it more seriously and adopt it in the coming years.

Samwel Bondin (ESO): The issue about bike lanes is the implementation thereof. If it rains, for instance, how would it be feasible to come here by bike?

Kartina Farrugia (Betapsi): Recently, the government has widened certain parts of Malta. It would have made more sense to have more bike lanes rather than more space for cars.

Samwel Bondin (ESO): However, by doing what you are suggesting, we would not be catering for the majority of people. Speaking for myself, I would find it very difficult to cycle from Zurriek to University and back every day, especially in certain weather conditions.

Katrina Farrugia (Betapsi): I know someone who cycles to University from San Pawl il-Bahar every day. Hence, I do not think that it should be a problem for students to cycle to University.



Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): Obviously, we will only be discussing suggestions as to what students can opt for in relation to alternative modes of transport. Hence, what applies to the North does not necessarily apply to the South. With this being said, there are other modes of transport that students can opt for. There are different solutions that are feasible. Hence, you do not necessarily only need to cycle to University but you can resort to other alternatives.

Luca Arrigo (ESN Malta): Will we be taking a decision as to whether a demonstration will take place?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Yes, we will be taking such a decision. Moreover, we will be tackling ways in which it can be done.

Luca Arrigo (ESN Malta): Would you mind repeating the question please?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): “Do you think that a demonstration should take place to raise awareness regarding such parking issue at the University? If so, in what way?”

Luca Arrigo (ESN Malta): I understood that a part of the demonstration would bring to light the alternatives available.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): The train of thought changed from parking problems to transparency and lack of communication.

Luca Arrigo (ESN Malta): So, you would rather have a public demonstration on an internal problem?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): It is up to the students present today to decide on the main focus of the public demonstration. This is why we opened the floor to discussion, so that you can voice your opinion.

Luca Arrigo (ESN Malta): Communication is not a problem that the country cares about, but it is a problem that only University students care about. If a public demonstration is done, we should bring to light issues that are a national problem. Adding bike lanes could be a solution but it is not a solution for everyone. Later on in the meeting we will be discussing alternative modes of transport, which we should have discussed together with the demonstration not separately. At the end of the talk (point 5) we will be issuing a consensus on this matter.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): The last question is related to the possibility of building a metro system. It will be discussed at the end.

Naomi Bugre (Insite Malta): I get what you are saying but the question does not mean a public demonstration will be held but only that a demonstration will be held. It can be done on



campus and not necessarily on a national scale at Valletta for instance. If we want to promote alternative modes of transport, then that is another story. However, it would not necessarily work since we only form part of KSU's Social Policy Commission, so there is only so much we can do. We should definitely involve NGOs. With regards to the demonstration, I think that it should be held on campus with as many students as possible present so that we can show a united front.

Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): To be honest, if you think about a demonstration, this is a national problem because parking and transport is a national problem. It would make sense to have a demonstration unless the University of Malta does not attempt to change the situation internally. We need to show them that change can and must happen. Simply demonstrating would not result in anything. Such a demonstration can be held, but it is to be held after the University does not attempt to amend the situation of lack of communication. We need to show them that we are ready for change. For instance, changing the parking system. Just demonstrating will not solve the problem.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): So, what you are saying is that University, once it starts promoting awareness on certain issues, then we should take the streets?

Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): Wherever it happens, it will still be public *per se*. If media is going to cover this, the venue of such a demonstration would not make a difference. Let us say that we start implementing the carpooling system properly and efficiently, that would give us a reason to hold this demonstration to show people that we can be the change.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): KSU, together with the students, has been working on and implementing these alternative modes of transport.

Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): Yes of course but at the moment they are not shining. Once they do, then we can organize such a demonstration.

Naomi Bugre (Insite Malta): So, you do not think that a demonstration should be held simply with regards to the lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students in a generic manner?

Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): Since we are considering the issue of alternative modes of transport, I think that it is a separate issue. I think that a demonstration with regards to the lack of communication between the University of Malta and University students can be held in the near future. However, such a demonstration on the alternative modes of transport cannot be held as of yet. It definitely needs more time.



Andre Camilleri (MHSA): Just to clarify, the first thing that came up in our group was that a demonstration should not take place because the general does not care about the lack of communication between the University of Malta and University students.

Katrina Farrugia (Betapsi): I am seeing three issues here:

1. Environment
2. Parking Spaces
3. Lack of Communication

We should deal with the lack of communication between the University of Malta and University students. Then, we can delve into the alternative modes of transport to get to University, and then we can broaden our horizons to a national scale.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): It is clear that we do not seem to be in agreement as to how the demonstration should take place. What about holding a demonstration with regards to the lack of communication on University grounds and then, upon Matthew's suggestion, once these alternative modes of transport start taking place more effectively, then more awareness is raised amongst the public? Do you have any comments?

Luca Arrigo (ESN Malta): A demonstration is the highest form of protest that we can organise and it is the most drastic measure we can take. To use our influence to complain about an email that was not sent, is a waste. There is a bigger issue, which is a national issue of transport. Together, we could use our voices to hold a demonstration on campus to bring attention to a project that could solve a transport issue in Malta for the upcoming number of years, which is a much bigger situation.

Stephanie Curmi (USPA): The lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students has led us to look like dummies. The role of all student organisations and of KSU has been undermined. In a way it is like we have been made fun of. If we hold a demonstration on such a lack of communication, we can prevent it from happening again.

Karl Baldacchino (MIRSA): I think that holding a demonstration is extraordinary. There is a lack of communication between the University of Malta and University students is a bone of contention that should be dealt with.

Chiara Vassallo (KNZ): I agree with the idea that we should put emphasis on the lack of communication. Substantial changes in the actual course, for instance, occur with the lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students. I would rather focus on larger information that affects the majority of students, which is the lack of communication. I think that addressing the transport issue would be more effective. We need something substantial for them to take note of us.





Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): I agree with you that protesting is the most powerful tool. If we do not protest with regards the communication issue, who will? Other people will protest on alternative modes of transport. However, no one will protest on the lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students. It is like saying that the Park and Ride system needs to be used while at the same time, we would not be making use of such facilities ourselves. It would only be deemed hypocritical.

Samwel Bondin (ESO): With regards to transport, instead of promoting carpooling, we should opt for putting pressure on Malta Public Transport to make their services more efficient.

Katrina Farrugia (Betapsi): If we communicate such an issue with the University of Malta, we would be able to tackle it more effectively as we would have the support of the University itself.

Daniel Cassar (JEF Malta): It is quite hard to protest about retroactive, case in point being the lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students. We should organise a Q&A session to see what the Rector can do about certain issues, so that then we can protest on what has been said rather than on the lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students.

Naomi Bugre (Insite): I tend to disagree with you Daniel because transport and lack of communication are to be kept separate. We cannot ignore the lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students as it happens on a daily basis. A Q&A session about a particular problem will not solve an issue in the future. In my mind, a demonstration would be more effective.

GhMU Left

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Maybe instead of having a demonstration we can have a public consultation session?

Naomi Bugre (Insite): I think that there should be a public demonstration.

Daniel Cassar (JEF Malta): My point is clearly about the frame of it. If the protest is out of context, the result arising therefrom would not be effective. If we ask the University of Malta to find a way to communicate with us, and this cannot be done, then we will have something to base demonstrations on.

Carla Galea (KSU President): If you are suggesting a demonstration, what ideas do you have in mind and what demands do you have specifically? Before organising such a demonstration, you need to have a final aim. Hence, we would like to ask for your demands and ideas.





Julia Zammit (SHS): Our question was precisely on this issue and we believe that we should not send a petition letter because they would not read it. However, if we were to send such a letter, we would mention the lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students and that we would not want it to happen again. We would say that we know students more than they do. We would also emphasise that there needs to be more communication between students and lecturers as well as the fact that we will retaliate if such actions are repeated.

Gian Peralta (JCA): One of the most pertinent issues with regards to the lack of communication at the University of Malta is related to lectures. It is very unprofessional to cancel a lecture 15 minutes after it starts. This is done very frequently at the University of Malta, at least in the Faculty of Laws.

Naomi Bugre (Insite): I agree that making noise for nothing is ineffective. We need to find a solid solution. We have a number of valid concerns and we always try to forward them to the University of Malta. However, they always tell us to find the solutions. I believe that they should come up with the solution. They form part of the University administration, so they should come up with a solution. They should propose a solution, present it to us, and then we will agree or disagree.

Carla Galea (KSU President): It makes sense. What ideas did you have in mind for the demonstration?

Julia Zammit (SHS): We had mentioned in other meetings things such as blocking corridors and parking in their parking spaces. Going out on a full-scale demonstration is too much. It should be kept within the University because people outside of University do not care. We should start small and work our way up.

Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): We had mentioned the whole clamping situation, which came across as childish. However, flooding the faculties with students is a good idea. The whole clamping issue would seem like we do not want parking to be reduced. It would come across like we do not want the project to happen.

Naomi Bugre (Insite): Just like the companies strike, we should make it clear that we will be demonstrating on a particular day for a particular reason. Whoever feels that there is an issue to communicate with the University of Malta, they should feel free to communicate it in that way.

William Farrugia (KSU Secretary General): Whatever action we decide to take, the following should be progressive:



1. Demand
2. Demonstration

With regards to the demand, it is to be made public. With regards to the demonstration, there is no way around this other than going all the way. It has to be something which people would want to avoid. If you are going to opt for a demonstration, protesting is not easy. I think that, before we get to that stage, we need to make clear that we have been feeling like this for a long time. You need to make it heard that there is a problem. People will support such a plea. If we protest on the parking issues, the focus will be shifted to parking, which should not be the case.

Luke Abela (KSU Vice President): Someone mentioned the blocking of parking spaces, which is a good idea but counter-productive at the same time. We need to rope the staff and lecturers in rather than making them angrier at the situation at hand. I think we should always look at the bigger picture and work for the bigger solution rather than parking. The developments are something that must be done, and parking will be removed regardless of whether we were informed or not. The bone of contention here is the lack of communication.

Julia Zammit (SHS): I do not think that we will come to an answer today. We need to speak to our executive board members and with our students to see what they believe should be done. It is fundamental to see what they want.

Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): I think we should take a vote in isolation on what we agree on.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Maybe we can take a vote on Julia's suggestion?

Carla Galea (KSU President): An idea would be to create a taskforce.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Will we be setting up a taskforce which will tackle the demonstration, the demands that are to be brought to the fore by University students, and everything all together?

Aidan Cauchi (ICTSA): Before planning the demonstration, why don't we take it slow and see where it takes us?

Carla Galea (KSU President): The taskforce would be a process towards the demonstration. I cannot predict what would happen with the University of Malta but I think that we should take a vote as to whether we should set up this taskforce.

Marcus Sammut (Wolves RFC Malta): Have we shown that there is a common feeling related to the lack of communication?





Carla Galea (KSU President): Yes of course. Both myself and the Presidents before me were frustrated numerous times. With this being said, we did not air our dirty laundry. I am pretty sure that Student Representatives have felt this with their respective faculties. Sometimes our complaints fall on deaf ears and sometimes they are catered for. We spoke from our end on the matters at hand so now we need to see what the way forward should be. Moreover, it is fundamental that we are consistent in this regard. Student organisations can send emails to the Deans of their respective faculties, to the administration of their Faculties, or to the Faculty Representatives, explaining what is going on and what our demands are. The email is to be sent in the same format, obviously relating the content to the respective faculties. I suggest that the emails are sent at the same time or at least during similar time slots. It is only then that we can take it step by step. With this being said, this can all be discussed in the taskforce, if you vote to set it up.

Marcus Sammut (Wolves RFC Malta): It would be ideal to include our demands in the letter we had mentioned earlier.

Carla Galea (KSU President): Students have so many demands that it would be impossible to include all of them in the same letter. It can only be of a certain length.

Luca Arrigo (ESN Malta): How I see it is that persons from different faculties must inform their own students to see what their issues are, which is basically what Carla is saying.

Jessica Napier (GhSL Malta): I would open a taskforce to all University students. It is much more representative that way. While I agree that we should take it slowly, sending an email is the least we could do because they have had a lot of time to tackle the lack of communication between themselves and the University students.

Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): I would like to suggest the following steps

1. First, we have to agree or disagree on the communication issue;
2. Then we have to take a vote on whether we will be adopting the committee style setup suggested by Carla; AND
3. Finally, we need to vote on the way forward with regards to transport.

Carla Galea (KSU President): I think it is good that we are realizing that there is a difference between the lack of communication and transport. With this being said, we cannot forget about transport.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Given that there was a show of concern, we either decide now or else we leave it up to the taskforce to decide upon the way forward.



William Farrugia (KSU Secretary General): I think we should also consider a timeframe at this point. When will it be decided? Will the two issues be decided on separate meetings? Will they be decided in today's KPS meeting? We need to decide on the timing for the events.

Gian Peralta (JCA): The transport issue is very much a pertinent issue but it is a derivative one. This is very much a long-term plan. The transport plan can be dealt with at a later stage but the communication issue should be dealt with immediately. We should focus on communication and then we can tackle transport later on.

Carla Galea (KSU President): I do not completely agree with you because transport is also a pertinent issue and, apart from that, it was already endorsed.

Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): We are clearly divided on the transport issue. Although it is a very pressing issue, Gian is right in stating that they should be dealt with separately. In my opinion, the lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students is more important.

Stephanie Curmi (USPA): I think we will not reach a decision today.

Luke Abela (KSU Vice President): In reality, we are discussing two separate issues and it is only in this case where they coincide. Before we proceed, we should identify how we should tackle each of these problems separately. In the bigger picture, we should tackle these issues separately. The lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students should be addressed to the right people as it is University-based whereas the transport issue is on a national scale.

Julia Zammit (SHS): With regards to the taskforce, involving University students is good, but should we involve them in the taskforce or should their opinions be gathered separately and mentioned by their representatives in the taskforce?

Jessica Napier (GhSL): I think that their opinions be gathered separately and mentioned by their representatives in the taskforce.

Julia Zammit (SHS): We have Student Representatives, so they can talk to the students who fall within their faculty, institute, or centre with the aim of forwarding their concerns to the members of the taskforce.

Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): Carla, when you suggested the taskforce, was it for different issues or only for the lack of communication?





Carla Galea (KSU President): It was aimed at tackling the lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students. It would be impossible to discuss a lot of things as discussions would be endless. If we agree on the setup of this taskforce, which in my opinion should consist of one person from each organisation, then we will take a vote on that. If you do not agree or have any other suggestions, please speak up now. Once the vote is taken, there is no going back.

Marcus Sammut (Wolves RFC Malta): Any consideration we could have should be discussed during the committee stage. It is useless to discuss now and reiterate what is discussed now in the taskforce.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We have to discuss certain issues here so that there would be something to present at the taskforce.

Katrina Farrugia (Betapsi): Would it be possible to create a taskforce to discuss the issue of lack of communication and a separate KPS meeting to discuss difficulties related to transport.

Marcus Sammut (Wolves RFC Malta): I would rather tackle communication first prior to delving into alternative modes of transport. Other than that, if we do not have a good communication basis with the University, then asking for more things would not be efficient. We should first tackle communication and then move on to transport.

Samwel Bondin (ESO): Why waste energy if students are not making use of the alternatives that are already available? We need to address this issue. Would it be feasible for University students to make use of certain modes of transport in certain weather conditions? We need to ask certain questions to see whether we can improve certain alternatives.

Naomi Bugre (Insite Malta): Our point was to deal with the lack of communication between the University of Malta and the University students and then move on to transport.

Carla Galea (KSU President): One point I wanted to make is that the demands for these separate issues are towards different people. For instance, the demands regarding the national transport issue is directed towards the government entities. A question I would like to raise is whether you would be interested in furthering discussions on the transport issue?

Matthew Micallef St. John (JCA): I think that there should be a consultation session where the transport committee meets up with the student organisations in a KPS setting so that we can discuss the matter further. Then, the taskforce for communication would be created.

Aidan Cauchi (ICTSA): Are all student organisation obligated to participate in such taskforce? Not all Faculties suffer from communication issues. Hence, such a taskforce would not be applicable to all student organisations.





Carla Galea (KSU President): Even though it is voluntary, I would still appreciate their views. With this being said, it is up to them to decide whether to attend or not. If I were in the taskforce, I would like to know how their faculties work.

Marcus Sammut (Wolves RFC Malta): What happens in the case where there is more than one organisation for the same Faculty?

Jessica Napier (GhSL): I think that, if there is more than one student organisation for the same Faculty, then it would be more beneficial to have all of them form part of the taskforce.

Carla Galea (KSU President): I understand your point, but I think that if something works within a structure, it works better. Possibly, we could have a meeting to invite other students to be present. I think that it would be better to have a smaller number of people discussing certain issues. Having a large number would just be another KPS meeting and we would be losing the whole point of setting up a taskforce.

Stephanie Curmi (USPA): The representatives present must ensure that they voice all concerns so that no opinions are left out.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): For the sake of clarification, will one representative or one person be attending the taskforce on behalf of their organisation?

Jessica Napier (GhSL): One representative per organisation.

Marcus Sammut (Wolves RFC Malta): Anyone who is interested may apply. In other words, not

Vote on taskforce that will deal with lack of communication, in which the structure and the plan about how we will go about this issue will be tackled (one representative per organisation)

Approved Nem Con

Vote on transport subcommittee that will attend the KPS meeting to discuss with the members of the Social Policy Commission

Approved Nem Con

N.B: Questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 (as posted in the KPS Group) will be discussed during the KPS meeting on transport and/or by the members of the taskforce.

Luke Abela (KSU Vice President): The transport subcommittee is open to anyone so feel free to join. We will be meeting up with Transport Malta in the coming days, so we will keep you



updated. If you have any suggestions that would improve mobility situation on campus, then we will go through your suggestions and will forward them to Transport Malta. If you have any ideas, feel free to share them. I just wanted to point out a few things:

1. With regards to transport, we are trying to solve a problem that we did not create in the first place. We need to realise our limitations. KSU can only do so much to mitigate the situation. This is not an excuse to do nothing. Transport has always been high on our agenda. With this being said, there is no particular solution to the problem, which is why we need to work on a number of solutions. We need to take a multimodal approach.
2. We have to believe in what we preach. I think we did contradict ourselves today. On the one hand, we were complaining that there is no Park and Ride system to cater for the southern part of the country whereas others held that the Park and Ride system is not being utilised. Why so? If we want similar services, we need to show the authorities that we are using the services available and that we want better routes and more Park and Ride services for example. We need to show the authorities that there is a demand for such change.

Meeting adjourned – 18:57