



## SOCIAL POLICY COMMISSION 19/20

### Meeting #1

University of Malta, The KSU Betsson Common Room

10<sup>th</sup> July 2019, 17.00.

17.00: Registration

**Katrina Farrugia** | Social Policy Commissioner: I would like to first start by introducing ourselves; I'm Katrina Farrugia – Social Policy Commissioner and this is Naomi Deguara – Social Policy Coordinator, and we form the KSU Social Policy Office. We both have experience in the Social Policy meetings, myself attending KPS meetings for three years straight, whilst Naomi attended KPS meetings during the last year. Our main aim this year is to make KPS meetings as interactive as possible. We would also like to emphasise the fact that you can utilise the table-a-motion, where basically you may choose the topics to be discussed and send them to us at least 5 days prior to the KPS meeting. This year we are amending the standing orders whereby the three consecutive absences will be replaced by three absences in total. This being said, if you are aware that you will not be attending the KPS meeting; we greatly encourage you to proxy your vote to another social policy representative of any other organisation of your liking present. This way you will still be considered present and your vote will still be used. If you need anything from both of us, please do not hesitate to approach us! We would love to help!

17.11: Approval of Agenda

17.11: Approval of minutes

RAR Board

**Katrina Farrugia** | Social Policy Commissioner: We in fact have one table a motion, we will work on it in the next KPS meeting, we also encourage you to make use of the proxy vote.





**Katrina Farrugia** | Social Policy Commissioner:

First point on the agenda is The RAR Board. The RAR Board will be made up of: Petra Grech, Christian Aquilina, Daniel Fondacaro, and Celine Talbot.

**Katrina Farrugia** | Social Policy Commissioner: The standing orders we have sent you are the newly amended version of the Standing Orders.

Standing order number 1.2. 1.3 1.4 have been amended:

1.2. The representation of a member organisation can be transferred to another member organisation in the former writing or sending an email to the Social Policy Commissioner and coordinator on their official KSU email address by a representative of the organisation in question. The proxy must be presented to the Social Policy Office prior to commencement of the KPS meeting in question;

1.3. Both the Social Policy Commissioner and Coordinator should inform the KSU executive during an official KSU Executive Meeting about any organisation which fails to attend three (3) KPS meetings in total. The said organisation shall then be informed of proceedings against it, as described in article 1.4, through an official communication reaching the contact details available on the Social Policy Commissioner and Coordinator's contact list by not later than the third failed meeting attendance; and,

1.4. Following a total of 3 absences to KPS meetings, failing to vest another student organisation with a proxy vote or failing to present a valid and justifiable reason, the student organisation in question will lose its voting rights within KPS meetings and will also lose the office allocated to it. Voting rights and application for a new office are resumed following the organisation's AGM.



**Katrina Farrugia** | Social Policy Commissioner: We remind you on the importance of your attendance in the next urgent joint KE KPS meeting, which will tackle the Matsec reform.

Friday's meeting will be held in Take-off, since common room will undergo maintenance.

**William Farrugia** | KSU president: Students who basically have the skills or the will and means to do so and it open also to students who would like to try it out. So, if you wish to participate, please do not hesitate to contact any of us, and the idea is that students will start putting together a programme for Campus FM, so that the station will become more student friendly. At the moment I am not sure of the exact number, very few people listen to Campus FM of which are mainly adults and academics. Hopefully as we progress in this initiative, we will also be launching some form of programming which involves organisations and students in general. But the idea is to get Campus FM functioning to attract more students during the early mornings and maybe even evenings.

**Katrina Farrugia** | Social Policy Commissioner: So finally, the last item on the agenda, is the budget 2020. We will be having a meeting with the prime minister, so we can provide him with a document with the suggestions of the results of this meeting.

5 groups of 7.

### Budget 2019

This following document gives an overview of last year's budget. The document is being written in order for you student organisations to get an idea of what kind of proposals were proposed for this year's budget. Due to the time constraints of the meeting and due to the fact that we represent students, the proposals mentioned are those that have to do with us students. The proposals are split into categories which include: **Education, Environment, Transport, Gozitan Students and Health**

During the upcoming KPS meeting you student organisations will be split into groups and assigned a topic to discuss. Although we will be focusing on the topics above (due to the fact that these topics



affect students the most) you will be given the time to discuss any other ideas you may have about other topics.

### In general:

- Stipend were increased once again last year.
- Lower VAT rate on e-books and grant on the purchase of musical instruments.

### Education

- The Government had proposed that they will make sure teachers continue striving and are trained to handle today's challenges.
- The Government proposed to further reduce students' stress levels and continue investing in the student's holistic wellbeing.
- Gradually, half yearly exams will be removed and replaced with a system of continuous assessment.
- Elimination of the MATSEC examination fees.
- The Government proposed that they are committed to improve apprenticeships and every kind of work experience and work-based learning for students. The Government also proposed that the classification of courses offered by the UM, Mcast and other licensed educational institutes will be revised. This revision will incentivize more students to choose courses that the industry needs.

### The Environment

- Grant on the purchase and installation of Reverse Osmosis Systems at Home
- The government proposed that there will be a beverage container refund scheme - this was still in the works.
- Farmers will continue receiving assistance with the distribution of new water.



- Cleanliness was given important in the previous budget, the Government proposed that they would like to improve the coordination of cleaning and maintenance works in the Maltese Islands.

### Transport

- The government proposed that they will be addressing parking challenges in our country, which is clearly getting worse as time goes by. The government had proposed to introduce new schemes, by creating new parking areas and by making use of modern technology for parking spaces and car parks. (For example, using electronic signs that indicate the parking spaces available)
- Free Tal-Linja Card: those who are aged between 16 and 20 and students will benefit from a free tallinja card.
- Free collective transports to and from school for all schools in Malta and Gozo
- Grant on the purchase of bicycles, electric bicycles and motorcycles.
- Investment in alternative modes of transport - by investing a grant to local councils.

### Gozitan Students

- Giving 1.50 euro daily to those workers who travel from Malta and Gozo via collective transport.
- Ongoing discussions between the Ministry for Gozo and ecclesiastical entities to offer a number of lodgings to Gozitan students at reasonable costs. Concurrently, the Government also proposed that they will be extending the subsidy given to Gozitan students under certain conditions through the housing scheme operated by the Housing Authority.
- New Jobs created in the private sector in Gozo.

### Health

- The Government proposed that in 2019 they will establish a number of new health services, including a number of mental health facilities. The Government proposed that they will be investing in a mental health clinic in the North of Malta, as well as a day centre and hostels



which will allow people with mild mental health problems to remain within the community and stay as active as possible/

- The Government also proposed that they will be launching a new investment for children with difficulties which do not allow them to fully participate in our education system, such as children with autism.
- The Children and Young People Services (CYPS) will be relocated to a more suitable alternative location.
- Investments in Mater Dei Hospital's health services.
- The Government is also committed to continue supporting health services for transgender persons, through a multidisciplinary team, as well as, new medicines and procedures.

## Education

Group 1: MHSA, ASCS, ELSA, Futsal and Third Eye.

Group 1: So, we started discussing the challenges that student face in Malta, and what the budget proposed. We discussed the teachers wages and we have come to a conclusion that the actual pay is very little compared to the work that they do. The pay does not incentivize people to actually choose a career in teaching, increases the work load of teachers in the education system especially when taking into account the workload that they do. We have also discussed the warrant form, which was dropped. Collectively we have agreed with the warrant form only if it is extended to all professions. According to the budget document, the people entitled to a warrant will have to renew it every year.

Secondly, we have discussed the point on which the government proposed the reduction of stress levels, and we have focussed mostly on the a-level learning system, which we believe are focussed mostly on learning by heart. Therefore, if we could propose that the education system



adopts alternative measures, such as enhancing research-based learning, we could tackle stress levels in a more effective approach.

Thirdly we have discussed the half-yearly examinations, we agreed with it essentially, however it would make more sense to include more focus on assessments.

We have also mentioned the Matsec examination fees, as a minor footnote.

With regards to apprenticeships, the government has claimed that is committed to focus on the improvement on apprenticeships, we have come to a conclusion that these need to be offered to all courses. Various courses lack apprenticeship opportunities, in some cases having the private sector offering these opportunities, whilst the equivalent governmental entities do not.

We have also agreed with the payment of these apprenticeships.

## Environment

Group 2: DESA, ESA.

Lacking in nature basically, restrictions are a bit higher. Inside plants Trees and more on the inside of the building. Increase beach clean-ups. More investment in solar energy in Malta, more efficient and less bulky, a good source of Renewable energy.

**Andrew Alexander Caruana** | ESA: What we can also consider is implementing organic recycling bins and maybe adding more recycling bins, something very simple but is very effective.





**Julia Zammit** | SHS: Something else that I would like to speak about on this point; is the increase of indoor plants, most buildings have a lot of potential space which can be utilised well by the addition of indoor plants. Another point is the potential space on rooftops; most rooftops can be transformed into potential gardens, these will not only help the environment but also the well-being of everyone else.

**Andrew Alexander Caruana** | ESA What we can propose; especially for the Vision 2020, 2030 projects; is the construction of a roof on the parking space.

## Transport

ESA, DESA, S-cubed, MPSA, SHS, IST

We have went over the document and we have come to an agreed conclusion that there is not a sufficient amount of bus routes, since for the not part the bus routes, the university of Malta is not the central route. Transport should also cater more for Gozitans it already takes theses students 1 – 2 hours to get to university. So, the fact that these students end up waiting thirty minutes for the next bus since most buses fill up immediately, is unacceptable. We also think that the bus routes should be revamped. There is not enough promotion of alternative modes of transport, like for example subsidies on scooters and bikes. This idea can ease the load on the university parking problem and the traffic problem. This should come with the inclusion of bike lanes and bike racks, especially now that the Maltese island are undergoing volumized infrastructure, bike lanes and bike racks should be compulsory in all new infrastructure plans.

A lot of issues are rather difficult to implement however, simple things could be done regarding parking; the government should incentify car-pooling in public spaces.







**Andre Camilleri** | MHSA: Whilst I agree with the addition of bike lanes. The issue remains that simply by adding one bus route, you will be adding one more car in the Maltese roads. So, this doesn't necessarily mean that they will reduce traffic. Personally, I believe that the efforts should be more focussed on encouraging people to use alternative modes of transport rather than the addition of more vehicles.

**Justin Cauchi** | S-Cubed: The issue isn't to add more buses but to revamp the current routes.

**Abigail Galea** | ALLT: Maybe we could have better bus shelters since in summer it is usually an issue. I have seen places abroad where they have covered the bus stop shelters with solar panels.

### **Gozitan Students**

MIRSA, ESO, MMSA, UESA and SDM.

Basically, we all agree, with the intentions of the current proposals but we also think that they need a lot of building upon. With regards to the 1.5 euro given to the workers who travel from Malta to Gozo without their cars; we have agreed with; however, this should be extended to the students who also do so daily. With regards to transport, feasibility of building a tunnel. In terms of the complexity of actually implementing this will lead to the increase of traffic and a great financial burden on the government. The recent pledge made by the prime minister, was to increase job opportunities in Gozo, however this promise has not been met yet. We discussed the idea of directing routes from Cirkewwa to University. Students currently travel for free, we believe that free transport should be for all Gozitans, not a select few.



## Health

JCA, DESA, Betapsi, UBG and ALLT.

We have discussed the current health care facilities in Malta and we have come to a conclusion that they are sufficiently funded, with the exception of mental health facilities. What we have discussed with regards to facilities, as opposed to building new mental health institutions, we should invest in the ones that we already have. We all know about the current situation in Mount Carmel and how underfunded it currently is; how patients are treated like prisoners, etc. We have discussed that there should be an investment in increasing the wages of the medical staff working in Mater dei, and we also proposed the introduction of the Mental Health First Aid course and make it free to the general public. Ideally free of charge, but if this is not possible, maybe subsidize the fee.

**Nicholas Aquilina** | MHSA: It is actually not that expensive.

**Katrina Farrugia** | Social Policy Commissioner: The problem is that the entity responsible for providing this course in Malta, is a private NGO.

**Gian Peralta** | JCA It could be implemented as a state funded project, where the government provides if for free or subsidizes is it to promote it better.

**Abigail Galea** | ALLT: Unfortunately, the ideas were too vague, and no concrete solutions where given. It easy to write an idea on paper, but it needs to be implemented.

**Nicholas Aquilina** | MHSA: There are facilities that help these people further and more professionally. The problem is that they do not have as much support the budgeting.



**Luanne Grima** | Betapsi: We also mentioned the issue with mild mental health issues.

Depression even though mild can be very debilitating. Moreover, in this budget, there is also no mention of the inclusion of a mental health centre, which was proposed by the government a few years back.

**Katrina Farrugia** | Social Policy Commissioner: It was proposed in 2018 budget, and not proposed in the 2019 Budget.

**Andre Camilleri** | MHSA: The problem with that proposal was that they wanted it to be rushed, which will indicate that all the cases will end up in the community.

**Julia Zammit** | SHS: I personally haven't heard about this. However, I do have a personal opinion on this. I would suggest, that they do an extension of Mater Dei rather than revamp the hospital of Mount Carmel.

**Lyon Vella** | Betapsi: Mental health, in order to heal patients are required to make use of the physical environment. We do not believe that the area in Mount Carmel provides a holistic environment. The walls should be painted in a colour that uses the least amount of energy. Yoga therapy and definitely communication therapy play crucial roles in mental health therapy. This is the way forward and when we plan on the improvement of Mental health institutions we should definitely keep these dynamics in mind.

**Julia Zammit** | SHS: I don't know it was mentioned before, I believe that the mental health first aid course should be given compulsory to secondary school students.



**Katrina Farrugia** | Social Policy Commissioner: We will be recapping on what was discussed in this meeting and close it off each point with a vote. As I previously said, you can contact us until tomorrow, if you come up with any additional proposals from the rest of the organisations.

First up was education: what was mentioned was that those who work in teaching do not have adequate pay when taking into consideration the intense workload. Another point mentioned was the implementation of a teaching warrant, and you have proposed that this should be extended to all careers. You have also proposed a reduction in the stress levels of students. By stopping students from learning by heart and moving towards a more interactive approach. Finally, there was a point on apprenticeships, most courses do not provide the availability and the ones who have these opportunities; are mostly unpaid. The half yearly exam removal, and the increased focus on the syllabus as a replacement to the half yearly exams.

The points on the Environment raised where focussed on the planting of more plants and trees, both indoors and on roofs, and restricting the planning authority from allowing excessive infrastructural plans. Having more clean-ups and adding more biodegradable organic bins. Constructing a roof in the parking places with the inclusion of solar panels.

Revamp the bus routes to university, so that they would also become more frequent and have better bus shelters. Having actual shade etc. and also subsidising alternative modes of transport. We should also cater for bikes and motorcycles and also include bike lanes for the new roads like Marsa etc. Proposals have been made on the increase of more parking spaces reserved to carpooling.

For Gozitan students. More subsidies to cross the Malta Gozo border. There is also the tunnel dilemma, which we have agreed that there is an uncertainty whether this is a feasible approach, but our focus should be more oriented on improving the current bus routes.





## KUNSILL STUDENTI UNIVERSITARJI

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We focussed a lot on mental health, the points mentioned were mostly on the focus of revamping the current institutions rather than building new ones. The inclusion of mental health first aid as a compulsory subject in secondary school, and or free to the general public we should revamp the ones that we already have.

The proposals have all been approved

Meeting adjourned

