

## Press Release

### SME Barometer ® Q1 2026 Results Published

The Malta Chamber of SMEs has published the findings of its SME Barometer® for the first quarter of 2026, providing an overview of the current business climate and key challenges faced by SMEs in Malta.

The survey, conducted between 3rd April and 17th April 2026, gathered 382 responses from businesses operating across a wide range of sectors, including retail, construction, tourism, professional services, and manufacturing. Respondents represented a diverse mix of enterprises, with the majority employing between 1 and 49 employees. This distribution provides a representative snapshot of the SME sector and its current operating environment.

### Key Findings

The results indicate that **employee shortage remains the most significant issue**, cited by 41.8% of respondents as one of the top two challenges currently impacting their business. This continues to highlight ongoing pressures in the labour market.

Other prominent concerns include:

- **Unfair competition** (21.5%)
- **Traffic congestion and skills mismatch** (both at 15.7%)
- **Processing of third-country national (TCN) visa applications** (14.6%)

#### ABOUT MALTA CHAMBER OF SMES

Malta Chamber of SMEs (Formerly known as GRTU) is the largest social partner in Malta representing over 7,000 SMEs from over 90 different sectors. The SME Chamber has been established for over 70 years and its aim is of safeguarding the interest of businesses at large.

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- **Rising inflation and cost pressures**, alongside **late payments**, **excessive competition** and **the international situation** each affecting a notable proportion of businesses

### Broader National Concerns

When asked about national priorities, respondents identified a range of structural and governance-related issues that they believe require attention. These include concerns related to overpopulation (38%), lack of governance (32%), level of corruption (25%), and increase in inflation (24%).

When asked whether Malta is moving in the right or wrong direction, responses from SMEs reflected a mixed sentiment. While a portion (41%) of respondents expressed confidence in the country's current trajectory, a significant number (59%) indicated concerns about the direction of key economic and structural factors.

When asked whether the next 12 months will be a good time to invest, SME responses reflect a cautious and somewhat divided outlook. Around **19% of respondents** believe it will be a good time to invest, while **49% remain uncertain**. Meanwhile, **32% indicated that they do not consider it a favourable period for investment**.

In two specific questions included in this survey, respondents highlighted concerns related to ongoing geopolitical developments, particularly the conflict in the Middle East and its potential impact on energy prices, supply chains, and overall economic stability.

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While the direct effects on SMEs in Malta may vary, the uncertainty generated by such external factors is contributing to a more cautious business outlook.

With regard to the most effective forms of government support, 29% of respondents identified regulatory flexibility and a reduced administrative burden as the most beneficial measures, followed by 22% who highlighted financial assistance and 17% who pointed to supply chain and logistics facilitation.

Respondents also emphasised the importance of information and advisory support, improved access to finance, and ensuring a level playing field to help businesses navigate ongoing challenges.

## Conclusion

The Q1 2026 SME Barometer highlights a business community navigating a combination of labour market challenges, cost pressures, and structural concerns. The findings aim to contribute to ongoing dialogue between stakeholders and support informed decision-making on matters affecting SMEs.

The Malta Chamber of SMEs will continue to monitor trends and gather feedback from the business community in the coming months.

**N.B. This survey was conducted prior to the announcement of the election date.**

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### About Malta Chamber of SMEs:

The Malta Chamber of SMEs is a leading advocate for small and medium-sized enterprises, dedicated to championing their interests, fostering innovation, and driving economic prosperity in Malta.

### About MISCO:

MISCO, a renowned research and consultancy company, specializes in providing actionable insights and strategic solutions to empower organizations, human resources and upskilling across various industries

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