

Press Release

SME Barometer ® Q2 2026 Results Published

BUSINESSES CONTINUE TO BATTLE EMPLOYEE SHORTAGES WHILE NATIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE AND EASE OF DOING BUSINESS RISE ON THE AGENDA

The Malta Chamber of SMEs, in collaboration with MISCO Malta, has published the findings of the **SME Barometer Q2 2026**, based on responses from **402 businesses operating in Malta** collected between **1st and 22nd July 2026**. The survey provides an important snapshot of business sentiment, operational challenges and national priorities among Malta's SMEs.

Key Findings

For another consecutive quarter, **employee shortages** remain the single biggest challenge facing SMEs, cited by almost four in every ten businesses (38.8%), slightly down from previous survey. Despite ongoing efforts to increase employee supply, recruitment continues to constrain business growth across multiple sectors.

Unfair competition remains the second most pressing concern (19.2%), with businesses increasingly pointing towards inadequate enforcement of regulations as the primary source of market distortion. Nearly one quarter of respondents believe that businesses failing to comply with existing laws and regulations enjoy an unfair competitive advantage, while others highlighted competition from public entities and inconsistent enforcement.

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.

SPOKESPERSONS

Paul Abela | President

HEAD OF COMMUNICATION

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Compared with previous quarters, concerns regarding the **processing of Third Country National (TCN) visa applications** and **inflation** have increased again, reflecting continued pressure on businesses trying to recruit workers while managing operating costs.

Concerns relating to **transport costs** and the **international crisis situation** have declined significantly since Q1 2026.

National priorities shift towards quality of life

Businesses continue to rank **overpopulation** as the country's most important issue requiring government action, with concern increasing further compared with previous quarters. At the same time, **safeguarding quality of life** and **improving the ease of doing business** registered some of the largest increases in importance, indicating that businesses are increasingly seeking a better balance between economic growth, public services and the overall business environment.

While **good governance**, **inflation** and **corruption** remain important concerns, all three registered lower levels of concern than in Q1 2026.

Business confidence remains cautious

Although 36% of respondents believe Malta is moving in the right direction, 64% believe Malta is moving in the wrong direction. A majority of businesses (56%) remain uncertain whether the next twelve months represent a good time to invest, while only around one in five businesses believe it is the right time to make new investments.

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Among those who believe Malta is moving in the wrong direction, the principal reasons relate to concerns over **quality of life, economic pressures, infrastructure and national planning, and cost of living**, reinforcing the importance of sustainable long-term planning alongside continued economic growth.

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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