

# Volt

## 10 Proposals Budget 2023

*Let's work toward a  
cohesive society*



## Volt Malta's 2023 Budget Suggestions

Volt Malta understands that there are a number of pressing issues at the moment. The cost of living, food security and rising debt are among them.

### Raising the Tide

#### 1) Increase the monthly Minimum Wage to €900 in 2023 up from €792. (then to €1100 in 2024).

- a) The minimum wage has been effectively stagnant and in real terms, declining when taking into account inflation. With the sharp spike in the cost of living and inflation, we need a real raise of the minimum wage. more than ever.
- b) Since 2010, the minimum wage has risen from 660 to 792, about 11euros a year, or, in other words, 1.6 - 1% a year.
  - i) In that same period of time, 2 countries have surpassed Malta's minimum wage (Portugal & Slovakia)
    - (1) Portugal €566 - €823
      - (a) Unemployment 5.9%
    - (2) Slovenia €647 - €1,164
      - (a) Unemployment 4.2%
  - ii) More countries are set to surpass Malta's minimum wage in 2023 (Lithuania)
    - (1) Lithuania €232 - €730, potentially up to €840 in 2023
      - (a) Unemployment 5.2%
- c) Raising the minimum wage would not proportionally increase prices, and there are studies to disprove it.<sup>1</sup> The minimum wage has effectively been suppressed, not keeping up with the rising cost of living or even inflation in the past years.
- d) Low-income households would be able to afford more of their essential needs without having to resort to charity or food banks, having a limited impact on consumer demand, which would be direct rather than indirect.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.upjohn.org/research-highlights/does-increasing-minimum-wage-lead-higher-prices>

## 2) Fight Period Poverty - Reduce the VAT on all Menstrual Products to 0%, study POYC integration.

(then reimbursable & introduction of free dispensers, sustainable products in via POYC for 2024).

- a) Taxes on menstrual products are regressive. They are not luxury goods but essential items which are required to avoid social exclusion.
- b) On average people who menstruate do so for around 40 years and therefore have to buy 10,000 - 17,000 sanitary products.
- c) For low-income households, especially with multiple persons who menstruate, this can be considered a significant, mandatory cost - which could trigger adverse effects (such as toxic shock syndrome from over-extending the use of sanitary products).

## 3) Increase Stipends - support & encourage students

- a) We believe that we should couple the raise of stipends with also increasing national financial literacy.
- b) Base rate to €130 (up from €100.92)**
  - i) Increase to €150 upon completion of a financial literacy course.*
- c) Prescribed Courses to €200 (up from €176)**
  - i) Increase to €220 upon completion of a financial literacy course.*
- d) High Priority courses to €385 (up from €365)**
  - i) Increase to €405 upon completion of a financial literacy course.*
- e) With the rising cost of living, raising the minimum wage isn't enough, we also need to ensure that there aren't fewer students attending post-secondary and tertiary education. This is also in light of news earlier this year, of students at JC are also breadwinners for their families.<sup>2</sup> Malta also has a very high drop-out rate, and with an ever-advancing global economy, we need to ensure that Malta is a competitive destination, that can

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<sup>2</sup><https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/junior-college-offer-four-year-courses-saying-many-students-work.974741>

develop new sectors, therefore we need to minimise deterrence from attending education.

## A Smart State

### **4) Conduct a thorough Audit & Performance review (through a non-government entity) of the entire public sector + publish results.**

- a) The public sector has grown significantly over the years, and now more than ever it's time to take stock of the situation. This would also be a proper belt-tightening exercise.
- b) The review should also assess salaries of particular government top jobs, and whether they are justified.
- c) It would also highlight where there are redundancies & where there are gaps.
  - i) It would open up the opportunity for retraining of excess personnel, or else absorption by the private sector which is in dire need of manpower.
- d) The results must also be published to the public in full, to allow for scrutiny, and also ensure accountability of the government in taking action, when it comes to fighting redundancies and excess staffing.
- e) The outcome would be a leaner, more efficient state that costs less and delivers more.

### **5) Develop a State Digital Dashboard of Expenditure.**

- a) This would be a digital, easily accessible, regularly updated dashboard displaying the expenditure of each ministry and government department for what purposes.
- b) A good example is [www.usaspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov) from the USA.
  - i) If a budget of trillions can be tracked, so can a budget of billions.<sup>3</sup>
- c) This would allow for greater transparency, public scrutiny, and also prudence by government officials when it comes to spending the public's money.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.usaspending.gov>

## **Fostering cohesion in Malta's society**

### **6) Fund “Maltese as a Foreign Language” education for refugees, and asylum seekers, and also open for others.**

- a) Adopting such education would also facilitate a more inclusive community.
- b) It would also open up the Maltese language to a broader community, increasing its use.

### **7) Fund programmes to teach Maltese & European cultural & civic norms for refugees, and asylum seekers, and also open for others.**

- a) It will facilitate better cohesive community building, allowing for fewer barriers between nationalities living in Malta, and lower ‘tensions.’
- b) It should also facilitate public programmes to inform the public at large of different cultural backgrounds.

## **Greener, Cleaner, Healthier**

### **8) Initiate a process of covering all publicly owned buildings in solar panels (where not overshadowed), and create ‘solar rights’.**

- a) Before allowing the use of the very limited public land for green energy such as solar panels, it is worth maximising the potential of underutilised

### **9) Step Up cleanliness, and public education on cleanliness outdoors.**

- a) To reduce the quantity of pests, and also the growing number of menacing hornets a serious step must be taken in public cleanliness.
- b) Would not only benefit the public and the environment but also a better experience for tourists too.

### **10) Create grants & incentives for vertical farms, community gardens and roof gardens.**

- a) This would facilitate food security.

- b) Community gardens would also foster community building in localities where responsibility would be led by the local councils, with the help of the local communities.