

RULE OF LAW

MALTA'S INPUT TO THE 2026
ANNUAL RULE OF LAW REPORT

January 2026

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1. Information on developments and measures taken to implement each of the recommendations addressed to your Member State in the 2025 Rule of Law Report

Recommendation 1: Take forward the ongoing reform to involve the judiciary in the procedure for the appointment of the Chief Justice, taking into account European standards on judicial appointments.

On 13 May 2025, the Government tabled the [Constitution of Malta \(Amendment\) Bill \(Bill No. 134\)](#) in parliament. Amongst other provisions, the Bill proposed an amendment to Article 96(3) of the Constitution intended to formalise mandatory consultation with the incumbent Chief Justice, prior to the appointment of a new Chief Justice. This requirement reflected the Chief Justice's significant statutory role in representing the judiciary as a collective body and aimed to reinforce judicial involvement in the appointment process.

The Bill was debated in Parliament between May and June 2025. However, the proposed amendment, which required a two-thirds majority, did not secure the necessary votes given the lack of support from the Opposition.

Recommendation 2: Step up efforts to improve the efficiency of justice, particularly to reduce the length of proceedings.

The Government intensified efforts to improve the efficiency of the justice system, focusing also on measures intended to reduce the length of proceedings. These include continued digitalisation (progressing the Court Information Management System to final evaluation, launching the Legal Aid Management System, and enabling online appeals), targeted legislative reforms (including work on the Commercial Court and Family Court reforms and the compilation of evidence reform), and capacity and infrastructure measures (including further judicial appointments and upgraded court facilities). Collectively, these measures aim to reduce procedural bottlenecks and strengthen case management across the justice system.

Increase in the Members of the Judiciary

As part of the efforts to expedite judicial proceedings, the increase in the number of members of the judiciary is as follows:

	December 2020	December 2021	December 2022	December 2023	December 2024	December 2025
Judges and Magistrates (including the Chief Justice and the Judge serving at the ECtHR)	43	48	48	53	57	60
Total % increase over the years (2020 to date)					39.5%	

Digitalisation

The Government remains committed advancing the transition to a more digitalised justice system as pledged by the [Digital Justice Strategy \(2022-2027\)](#).

Key digital measures implemented in 2025 include the launch of the Legal Aid Management System ([21 May 2025](#)), the online submission of appeals from decisions of the Commissioners for Justice, and upgraded audio systems across courtrooms in Malta and Gozo - all aimed at reducing administrative delays and improve accessibility in proceedings.

In parallel, amendments to the Court Practice and Procedure and Good Order Rules (Subsidiary Legislation 12.09 of the Laws of Malta), which entered via [Legal Notice 238 of 2025](#) on 14 October 2025, strengthened digital working practices by allowing email service and communications, clarifying time-limit triggers for

electronic notices, constraining adjournments to exceptional circumstances (supported by oath-confirmed applications), and requiring pre-trial hearings to be scheduled within two months after the close of pleadings - measures that directly support expeditious, digitally enabled case-management.

Furthermore, Government is collaborating with the OECD (TSI project) to further integrate ADR tools. The Arbitration Centre is developing a new digital platform to improve accessibility and information, and work is underway to evaluate digitisation of judicial auctions (both movable and immovable property) to enhance transparency and efficiency of enforcement processes.

Legislative Reforms

Commercial Court Reform

The [Various Laws relating to the Establishment and Jurisdiction of the Commercial Court \(Amendment\) Bill \(Bill No. 133\)](#), which seeks to establish the Commercial Court as a court separate from the Civil Court, First Hall, and to confer jurisdiction over cases of a commercial nature has undergone its Committee Stage in the House of Representatives and is expected to be finalised for publication by the end of the first quarter of 2026.

The establishment of a specialised Commercial Court is expected to accelerate the hearing of commercial cases by providing increased expertise and specialisation. An efficient Commercial Court is a strategic instrument for foreign investment, in view of the fact that investors tend to look at a country's ability to offer judicial redress in case of disputes. Apart from this, the predictability and legal stability offered by a specialised court will strengthen Malta's competitiveness as a centre of financial and commercial services.

Furthermore, specialisation also begets more consistency in judgements. Specialised members of the judiciary will be better placed to understand the complexity of commercial contracts, bankruptcy issues and technical disputes and this will lead to greater confidence in the judicial system by economic and legal operators. To support this initiative, the Court Services Agency has acquired dedicated premises, which are currently being renovated to house the new Commercial Court.

Family Court Reform

The reform of the Family Court, aimed at providing families with more supportive and effective access to justice, as well as with a more efficient and supportive legal framework to navigate their disputes in a timely and sensitive manner, continued to advance throughout 2025. Feedback received during the public consultation was thoroughly reviewed and consolidated into a draft legislative Bill, which is scheduled to be tabled before the House of Representatives in February 2026.

Concurrently, in the first quarter of 2025, the Family Court underwent refurbishment, including the addition of a new hall and upgraded facilities for mediation and child advocacy, to improve the hearing environment and enhance the availability of support services. To further support implementation, the Court Services Agency has acquired dedicated premises for the Family Court, which are currently under renovation. These premises will provide fit-for-purpose facilities for specialised sittings and services once the legislative reforms come into force.

Compilation of Evidence and Referrals

The reform for evidence compilation in the Court of Magistrates will introduce an accelerated disclosure and committal process, moving away from traditional oral committal proceedings where every witness testifies in person. Instead, expedited processes will increasingly rely on pre-documented evidence. This change aims to significantly reduce the duration of committal proceedings and enhance the overall efficiency of criminal proceedings.

A [public consultation](#) was launched in 2023 to gather input from a wide range of stakeholders and the general public on proposed reforms to criminal committal proceedings. The feedback received was integrated into a draft Bill. Given other legislative priorities, progress on this Bill was temporarily deprioritised during 2025. However, the Government intends to resume work on the draft throughout 2026, with a view to presenting it to the House of Representatives.

Magisterial Inquiries Reform (In Genere)

The [Criminal Code \(Amendment No. 3\) Act, 2025 \(Act No. VIII of 2025\)](#) was published in the Government Gazette of Malta on 11 April 2025.

Apart from a complete overhaul of the system of magisterial inquiries, the Act formally established the Office of Inquiring Magistrates, dedicated exclusively to magisterial inquiries. This reform ensures that these Magistrates no longer preside over regular court sittings but instead focus full-time on clearing the backlog and managing new inquiries.

The legislative change builds on an earlier initiative whereby, following a government call for additional magistrates to be assigned for this purpose, the President of Malta appointed four new magistrates on 10 January 2024, who were subsequently designated by the Chief Justice to focus exclusively on magisterial inquiries.

To further support this reform, the Government invested and acquired new premises – Palazzo Conte – which was [inaugurated on 16 September 2025](#) to serve as a seat for Inquiring Magistrates, thereby continuing to further improve the working environment and efficiency of the system.

From early 2024 through end of August 2025, the specialised magisterial inquiry section registered 1,251 inquiries filed and over 830 concluded, with a clearance rate over 65 %. By dedicating specific magistrates to inquiries, the justice system aimed to ensure more consistent and expert handling of complex investigations, including fatal inquests and systemic issues.

The following schema indicates the number of inquiries opened over the past five years and the annual completion rates:

Year	New Inquiries	Closed Inquiries	Clearance Rate
2021	837	874	104.4%
2022	888	658	74.1%
2023	775	714	92.1%
2024	804	936	116.4%
2025 (until end of November)	724	1580	218.2%

Year	Closed Inquiries	Pending Inquiries	Adjusted Clearance Rate
2021	874	1403	38.4%
2022	658	1656	28.4%
2023	714	1598	30.9%
2024	936	1814	34.0%
2025 (until end of November)	1580	778	67.0%

Recommendation 3: Step up efforts to address challenges related to the length of investigations of high-level corruption cases, and to establish a robust track record of final judgments.

Government has strengthened the investigative capacity of the Financial Crimes Investigation Department (FCID) within the Malta Police Force (MPF) by establishing three investigative teams dedicated exclusively to corruption-related cases. This section is the second-largest sub-unit within FCID, following the Financial Crime Analysis Unit (FCAU), which provides analytical support for all high-complexity investigations across the Department.

All corruption reports are automatically assigned to one of the three dedicated investigative teams. Where investigations uncover complex money-laundering structures, an AML/TF specialist is integrated into the team to provide targeted expertise, while the Anti-Corruption Investigator continues to lead the case. In addition, the FCAU contributes analytical support, ensuring that these complex corruption cases benefit from comprehensive investigative and data-driven insights.

Furthermore, officers assigned to corruption investigations have undergone multiple specialised training programmes, webinars and seminars aimed at enhancing their ability to identify and combat corruption offences encountered in their duties. Key engagements in 2025 included:

Name of Event	Date	Organiser	Issues Covered
EU Competition Enforcement Training	3 - 4 March 2025	European Judicial Training Network	EU Competition Enforcement
Sixth Plenary Meeting of the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Network)	20 - 23 May 2025	GLOBE Network	Cross-border cooperation, strengthening operational exchanges, and consolidate the GlobE Network's role as a practical, informal platform for law enforcement collaboration.
The International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA) Annual Conference	13December 2025	IAACA	Report on IAACA's work in 2025 and major initiatives for 2026.

In mid-2025, discussions between the MPF and the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre (IAACA) were concluded, leading to MPF becoming a member of this independent, non-political organisation on 13 December 2025.

Additional, FCID's senior management undertook a scoping visit with the IACCC of the of the United Kingdom's National Crime Agency (NCA to initiate MPF's associate membership. The IACC currently includes 14 associate members, among them Malta's own Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit (FIAU).

Looking ahead, specialised training with the Economic and Cyber Crime Academy of the City of London Police focusing on thematic areas specifically tailored to corruption investigations will be undertaken throughout 2026.

Recommendation 4: Adopt further legislative and other safeguards to improve the working environment of journalists including on access to official documents, taking into account European standards on the protection of journalists and on access to official documents.

On 4 October 2022, the Government had tabled three Bills to the House of Representatives aimed at strengthening the fourth pillar of democracy:

- Committee for the Recommendation of Measures for the Protection of Journalists, other Media Actors and Persons in Public Life (Establishment) Bill ([Bill Number 17](#));
- Constitution of Malta (Amendment) Bill ([Bill Number 18](#)); and
- Protection of the Media and Journalists (Various Laws) (Amendment) Bill ([Bill Number 19](#)).

The legislative process was halted to allow the Committee of Experts to prepare an updated report following public consultations. This report was submitted to Government on 24 July 2023 and subsequently presented to the House of Representatives by the Prime Minister on 2 October 2023. During the parliamentary session, the Prime Minister announced plans to publish a White Paper outlining proposed media reform laws based on the Committee's final report, responding to requests for transparency.

The [Media Reform Public Consultation](#) was conducted between 1 August 2025 and 31 October 2025 on the basis of a White Paper issued by Government. This process will inform legislative proposals aligned with European standards on the protection of journalists. The Government is currently assessing the feedback received and will proceed accordingly with the legislative process.

In the meantime, existing safeguards remain in force, including (for instance access to public documents; the Freedom of Information (FoI) Digital System); and various initiatives undertaken to ensure adequate protection for journalists against undue interference).

Recommendation 5: Strengthen the rules and mechanisms to enhance the independent governance and editorial independence of public service media taking into account European standards on public service media.

Malta's constitutional and legal framework safeguards the independence for public service media in a democratic society. Building on this framework, Malta adopted the European Media Freedom Act (Measures for Implementation) Order, (Subsidiary Legislation 460.42 of the Laws of Malta) which implements the key requirements of Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act).

The Order introduces structural safeguards for governance and independence in public service media, including:

- Transparent Appointment Process: The Chief Executive Officer of the public service media provider must be appointed through a competitive process following an open call published at least one month in advance, with publicly available selection criteria.
- Protection Against Arbitrary Dismissal: Any dismissal decisions of the CEO or, where applicable, members of the management board) before the end of their term are subject to judicial review on points of law and fact before the First Hall of the Civil Court, upon application by the injured party within six months.
- Independent Monitoring: The Broadcasting Authority is designated to carry out the monitoring function under Article 5(4) of the EMFA in relation to public service media.

Additionally, the Order establishes an Office for Advertising and the Media as a distinct legal entity, providing explicit guarantees that its Head operates independently and is not subject to external direction or control. This measure supports a broader ecosystem of safeguards relevant to media independence and the prevention of undue influence, including through state advertising.

Recommendation 6: Take forward measures to establish a National Human Rights Institution taking into account the UN Paris Principles.

Malta remains firmly committed to advancing equality and combating discrimination in all spheres of life.

The Government is in the final stages to finalise the Human Rights and Equality Commission Bill. This legislation seeks to establish a dual-mandate body which will serve the functions of National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and as an equality body. Its design will ensure full compliance with the Paris Principles, thereby providing a robust framework for the promotion and protection of human rights in line with the highest standards.

The Bill was approved in principle by the Cabinet of Ministers. The Government will now engage in consultations with key stakeholders, including the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), to ensure broad alignment and support. Subsequently, the Bill will be finalised and presented to the House of Representatives for discussion and eventual adoption.

Recommendation 7: Introduce a formal framework for public participation in the legislative process.

A formal framework for public participation in the legislative process is already in place. Directive No. 6 on [Consultation Exercises with Stakeholders](#) was issued by the Principal Permanent Secretary on 24 February 2011, in accordance with Article 15 of the [Public Administration Act \(Chapter 595 of the Laws of Malta\)](#). This Directive was subsequently amended through [Directive No. 6-1](#), issued on 6 April 2017.

To further facilitate comprehensive dialogue on issues affecting citizens and stakeholders across sectors, the Government is pursuing a two-pronged approach:

- I. **Administrative set-up:** In order to strengthen further the coordination of public consultations across Government, the Department of Public Consultation was established under the Public Administration Act on 23 September 2025, following the publication of the [Public Administration Act \(Amendment of Second Schedule\) \(Amendment No. 2\) Order, 2025 \(Legal Notice 206 of 2025\)](#). Its function is “to facilitate discussion by establishing structures through which the public may contribute significantly on current themes and assist the Public administration in public consultations to strengthen social dialogue”.

The Department’s role is to promote informed public discourse and encourage active participation from citizens, businesses, NGOs, and other relevant entities with clear channels for feedback on both EU and national matters. This will ensure that public perspectives are incorporated early in the decision-making process. This strategic approach is designed to support policymaking that is streamlined, transparent, inclusive, and aligned with Malta's socio-economic priorities.

- II. **Improved framework:** Complementing this institutional set-up, the Government is enhancing the existing Directives No. 6 and 6.1 to ensure consultation practices remain efficient and effective in today’s dynamic environment. An update to these existing Directives is currently underway and undergoing the necessary internal reviews.

It is important to note that, in accordance with the Public Administration Act, the Principal Permanent Secretary is empowered to issue directives aimed at upholding and better realising public administration values, and public employees are legally required to comply with such directives. In this regard, directives carry the force of law.

This notwithstanding, it is important to highlight the below statistics, which illustrate the emphasis placed on public consultations over the past five years:

2021	94 consultations published, of which 23 were legislative and 71 were non-legislative
2022	44 consultations published, of which 12 were legislative and 32 were non-legislative
2023	55 consultations published, of which 19 were legislative and 36 were non-legislative
2024	58 consultations published, of which 21 were legislative and 37 were non-legislative
2025	65 consultations published, of which 21 were legislative and 44 were non-legislative

The following are the top three public consultations published during 2025 bearing record numbers of submissions on online portal excluding any formal submission received by other external bodies and excluding consultations activities (face to face meetings, focus groups, surveys) performed with various stakeholders.

Title of Public Consultation	Legislative/ Non-Legislative	Number of participants
Public Consultation on Assisted Voluntary Euthanasia	Non-Legislative	13,784
Public Consultation on a holistic planning reform	Legislative	1,484
Malta Labour Migration Policy	Non-Legislative	241

2. Information on developments that are relevant for updating and following up on the assessment of the topics covered in the respective country chapter of the 2025 Report, including possible clarifications; and any other new developments considered relevant

I. Justice System

A. Independence

1. Appointment and selection of judges, prosecutors, and courts presidents (including judicial review).

Judiciary

During 2025, the judiciary experienced a series of movements, reflecting both generational transition and institutional reform. Two Judges retired from the Superior Courts in June 2025 upon reaching the statutory retirement age. On 5 August 2025, the Minister for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector issued a public call for the appointment of two judges and two magistrates.

On 13 November 2025, the President of Malta appointed two former Magistrates as Judges and two additional new Magistrates.

Later in November 2025, another Judge retired upon reaching the statutory age limit. In response, on 7 November 2025, a further public call was issued for the appointment of one judge and three magistrates.

On 23 January 2026, the President of Malta announced the appointment of [one Judge](#) (elevated from Magistrate) and [three new Magistrates](#).

Prosecutors

Following the reforms at the Office of the Attorney General, which expanded its prosecutorial functions, recruitment efforts have further progressed. In 2025, 6 new lawyers and 3 administrative staff were recruited, raising the total workforce to 112 employees, comprising of, 76 prosecutors and 36 administrative and support staff. Additionally, 6 more lawyers joined the Office during the first week of January 2026.

2. Irremovability of judges, including transfers (including as part of the judicial map reform), dismissal and retirement regime of judges, court presidents and prosecutors (including judicial review).

The retirement age for members of the judiciary is currently set at 65. Article 97 of the Constitution of Malta reads that:

... a judge of the Superior Courts shall vacate his office upon reaching the age of sixty-five (65) years:

Provided that a judge of the Superior Courts shall inform the Chief Justice and the President of Malta of this decision before he reaches the age of sixty-five (65) years once he chooses to remain in office until he reaches the age of sixty-eight (68) years.

By virtue of the aforementioned Bill No. 134, the Government proposed constitutional amendments to allow the extension of the judicial retirement age to 70, subject to the approval of the Commission for the Administration of Justice. This approach sought to balance the need for institutional renewal with the advantages of continuity and accumulated judicial experience. However, the amendments did not pass, as they required a two-thirds parliamentary majority which was not attained due to a lack of support from the Opposition.

3. Promotion of judges and prosecutors (including judicial review).

Judiciary

Judges and Magistrates in Malta are automatically get promoted but are appointed according to the relevant provisions, as set out in Articles 96, 96A, 96B and 100 of the Constitution of Malta.

Prosecutors

Career progression within the Office of the Attorney General is governed by structured system of grade progression implemented through internal calls subject to eligibility requirements defined in the applicable arrangement and collective agreements. Advancements may also occur through competitive selection processes when vacancies arise, including public calls, Selection Board interviews, and the publication of a ranking.

Moreover, as previously explained, the Attorney General Ordinance (Chapter 90 of the Laws of Malta) was amended through the [Attorney General Ordinance \(Amendment\) Act, 2024 \(Act No. XXXIV of 2024\)](#), on 25 October 2024. This amendment introduced the possibility of designating additional Deputy Attorneys General, expanding from the limitation of a single Deputy Attorney General, with the objective of strengthening management capacity and ensuring that the Office meets its statutory responsibilities efficiently.

Finally, on 19 September 2025, the Office of the Attorney General adopted its revised [Code of Ethics for Prosecutors and Legal Procurators](#). The Code sets out the ethical standards applicable to legal professionals within the Office and articulates core principles through articles expressed as statements of responsibility, each accompanied by interpretative guidelines. This Code was developed under Project 23MT01 (Attorney General and State Advocate in Malta: Implementation of Action Plan for the Reorganisation of the Offices). Under the same project, a separate [Code of Ethics for Administrative Staff](#) was also established.

4. Allocation of cases in courts.

The assignment of cases to the judiciary is regulated by Article 11(3) of the [Code of Organisation and Civil Procedure \(Chapter 12 of the Laws of Malta\)](#), whereby the Registrar assigns cases as directed by the Chief Justice. Recent operational allocations by the Chief Justice include:

- (i) the assignment of four Magistrates dedicated exclusively to magisterial inquiries to address backlogs, and
- (ii) the assignment of three Magistrates to handle domestic violence cases (both summary proceedings and compilation of evidence), resulting in approximately eight sittings per week.

Case Management and Digitalisation

In line with the *Digital Justice Strategy (2022–2027)*, which aims to progressively redesign business processes across the justice sector through a digital-by-default approach, the Government is currently advancing the development of the Court Information Management System (CIMS). This system will introduce a centralised, modernised platform for court case management, thereby optimising workflows and enhancing operational efficiency within the Court Services Agency. The system forms part of the broader national commitment to improve case management, reduce procedural delays, and expand the use of digital tools within the justice system.

Withdrawal and Recusal

The Code of Organisation and Civil Procedure governs instances of abstention (withdrawal) and challenge (recusal) by members of the judiciary. These mechanisms safeguard the fundamental principle that every individual is entitled to a fair hearing before an independent and impartial tribunal, as enshrined in Article 39 of the Constitution of Malta and Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Article 734 outlines an exhaustive list of situations in which a judge may be challenged or may abstain from hearing a case. These grounds include, *inter alia*, circumstances that may give rise to actual or perceived bias, a direct or indirect personal interest, or any prior involvement in the matter that could compromise the appearance of impartiality.

5. Independence (including composition and nomination and dismissal of its members) and powers of the body tasked with safeguarding the independence of the judiciary (e.g. Council for the Judiciary).

There are no new developments to report.

6. Accountability of judges and prosecutors, including disciplinary regime and bodies and ethical rules, judicial immunity and criminal / civil (where applicable) liability of judges (including judicial review).

The [Constitution of Malta \(Amendment\) Act, 2025 \(Act No. XVI of 2025\)](#) which entered into force on 27 June 2025 introduced the new role of the Commissioner for Standards of the Judiciary, responsible for overseeing matters related to judicial conduct, including discipline. Subsequently, on 10 December 2025, retired Judge [Toni Abela was appointed as Malta's first Commissioner for Judicial Standards](#).

Under this new framework, the Commissioner may receive written requests related to the conduct of members of the judiciary from the Chief Justice, the Minister for Justice as well as the general public. The Commissioner is empowered to investigate such requests and determine whether sufficient grounds exist to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

The Commissioner for Standards of the Judiciary is however not empowered to make any finding of guilt or any recommendation in respect of such person under investigation without giving the said member of the judiciary access to all evidence and the right to be heard in accordance with the principles of fair trial.

Where the matter is referred to the Committee for Judges and Magistrates—a subcommittee of the Commission for the Administration of Justice—the Commissioner may act as prosecutor on behalf of the complainant.

Article 101AA of the Constitution of Malta provides: “(w)hosoever has concerns about any member of the judiciary that may give rise to his disciplinary proceedings in accordance with article 101B may submit such concerns in writing to the Commissioner for Standards of the Judiciary: (p)rovided that the Commissioner for Standards of the Judiciary may direct the person raising the concerns in writing to do so under oath”.

Following the Commissioner’s investigation, it therefore lies with the Committee for Judges and Magistrates that delivers its decision independently and impartially.

This reform gives more direct access for the public to the disciplinary process, greater accountability within the judiciary and a more structured and efficient response to judicial misconduct.

7. Independence/ autonomy of the prosecution service.

The below tables show the relevant statistical information in relation to prosecution by the Office of the Attorney General:¹

- Table 1 shows information on the total number of prosecutions initiated by the Office of the Attorney General since 1 October 2020; and
- Table 2 shows the offences prosecuted by the Office of the Attorney General from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025.

¹ This data excludes prosecutions which were still being carried out by the Malta Police Force during the transitory period.

Table 1

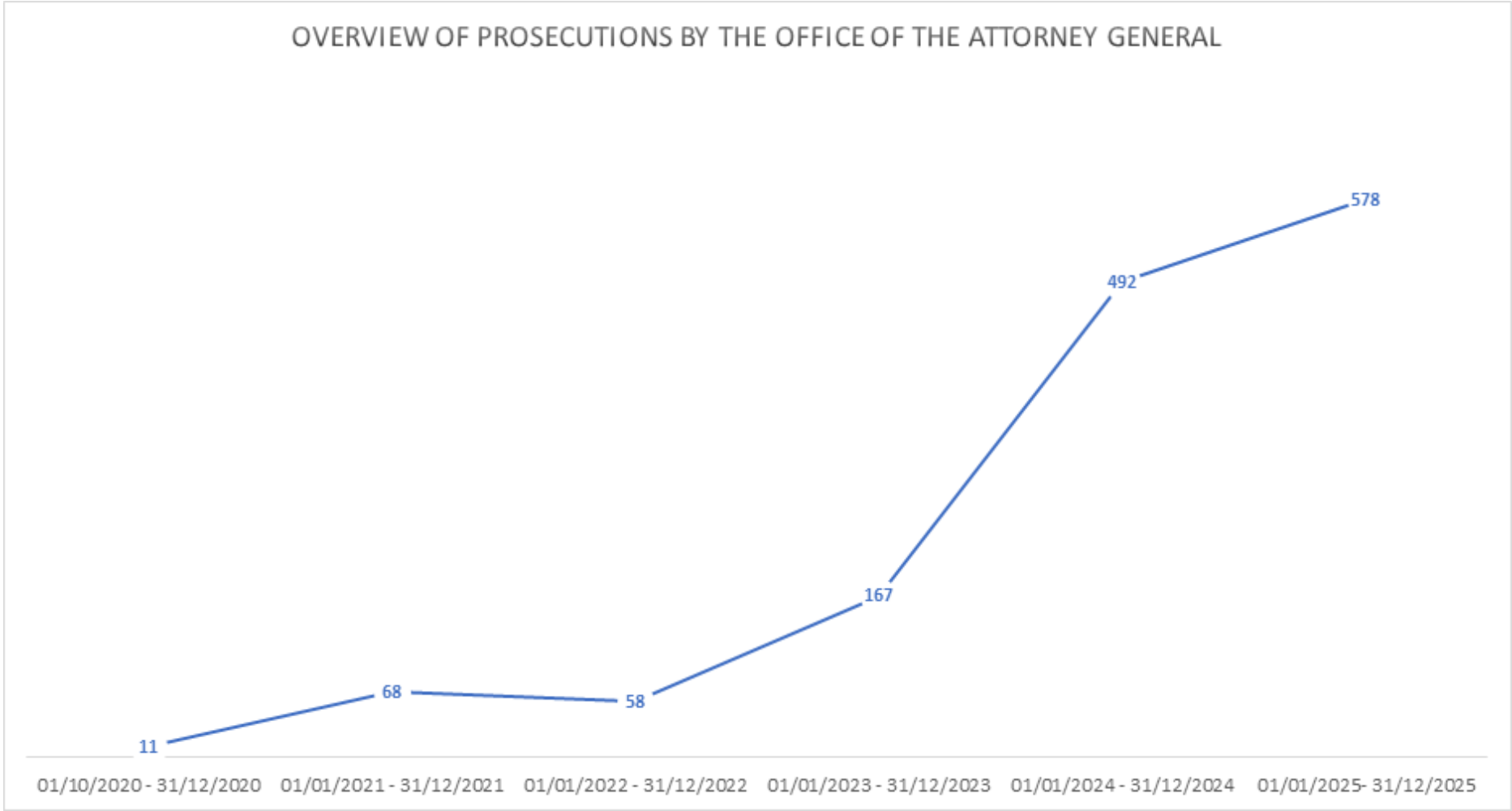


Table 2

Annual Review of Prosecutions by the Office of the Attorney General: 2025	
Aggravated Theft	135
Aggravated Drug Possession	41
Aggravated Drug Possession + Aggravated Theft	3
Aggravated Drug Possession + Conspiracy	1
Aggravated Drug Possession + Conspiracy to drug trafficking	1
Aggravated Drug Possession + Drug trafficking	56
Aggravated Drug Possession + Drug trafficking + Conspiracy to traffic drugs	1
Aggravated Drug Possession + Drug trafficking + Conspiracy	1
Aggravated Drug Possession + Attempt + Conspiracy & Drug Trafficking + Attempt + Conspiracy	1
Aggravated Theft + Attempted Grievous Bodily Harm	3
Aggravated Theft + Fraud	1
Aggravated Theft + Grievous bodily harm	1
Arson	6
Arson + Attempted Arson	1
Attempted Aggravated Theft	4
Attempted Arson + Grievous Bodily Harm	1
Attempted Fraud	1
Attempted Fraud + Attempted Grievous Bodily Harm	1
Attempted Grievous Bodily Harm	2
Attempted Grievous Bodily Harm + Aggravated Theft	6
Attempted Grievous Bodily Harm + Sexual Offences	1
Attempted Homicide	1
Computer Misuse	8
Computer Misuse + Aggravated Theft	1
Crime against the Elderly	1
Crime against the Elderly + Attempted Grievous Bodily Harm + Aggravated Theft	1
Crime against the Elderly + Grievous Bodily Harm	1
Drug Trafficking	14
Extortion + Embracery and Corruption	1
Extortion + Aggravated Theft + Aggravated Drug Possession	1
Fraud	9

Fraud + Aggravated Theft	5
Fraud + Human Trafficking	1
Fraud + Misappropriation	2
Fraud + Misappropriation + Aggravated Theft	1
Fraud + Grievous Bodily Harm + Attempted Grievous Bodily Harm + Aggravated Theft + Aggravated Drug Possession	1
Grievous Bodily Harm + Aggravated Theft	1
Grievous Bodily Harm + Aggravated Drug Possession + Drug Trafficking	1
Grievous Bodily Harm	130
Grievous Bodily Harm + Aggravated Theft	1
Grievous Bodily Harm + Crime Against the Elderly	2
Grievous Bodily Harm + Misappropriation	1
Grievous Bodily Harm with Arms proper	6
Attempted Homicide	1
Homicide	4
Human Trafficking	1
Involuntary Homicide	11
Involuntary Homicide + Grievous Bodily Harm	1
Misappropriation	2
Money Laundering	4
Money Laundering + Predicate	32
Sexual Offences	58
Sexual Offences + Crime against the elderly	4
Sexual Offences + Stalking involving fear of violence	2
Stalking + Fear of Violence	1
Tax Evasion + Aggravated Drug Possession	1
Trading in Influence	1
Wilful damage to cultural property	3
Wilful damage to cultural property + Arson	1

8. Independence of the Bar (chamber/association of lawyers) and of lawyers.

There are no new developments to report.

9. Significant developments capable of affecting the perception that the general public has of the independence of the judiciary.

There are no new developments to report.

B. Quality of Justice

10. Accessibility of courts/ legal (e.g. court/legal fees, legal aid, language).

Court/ Legal Fees

There are no new developments to report.

Legal Aid

In 2025, the Legal Aid Malta Agency continued strengthening the accessibility, efficiency, and citizen-centred delivery of legal aid services. Nationwide training for Servizz.gov officials² and contractors preceded the official launch of the Legal Aid Management System (LAMS) at the Public Service EXPO Village 2025, ensuring digital access to services across the Maltese islands.

In collaboration with the Commissioner for Children, the Agency rolled out a two-phase Children's Rights Awareness Project, distributing informative booklets to professionals which was launched in March 2025 and integrating infographics and lesson plans into Personal and Social Development curricula in schools launched in November 2025, coinciding with the World Children's Day.

Employee relations were strengthened through the finalisation of the first [collective agreement](#) signed on 30 October 2025, alongside team-building initiatives to foster collaboration and team effort to provide administrative legal services to eligible clients of legal aid services. Reform efforts in the legal aid lawyers' criminal panel included establishing a 25% remuneration increase for lawyers handling after-hours cases and the issuance of calls for reserve lawyers.

Training remained a priority, with administrative staff encouraged to pursue IPS courses and contracted lawyers sponsored for European Law Academy (ERA) seminars, enhancing both skills and international exposure. During April 2025, one lawyer from the criminal panel attended for training related to AI Systems and Fundamental Rights in the Justice system; another lawyer from the victims' representation panel attended ERA training related to EU Border Management covering topics related to Schengen governance, interoperability, EU databases, Frontex, EU Pact on Asylum and Migration and migrant smuggling. Two lawyers from the victims' representation attended ERA training related to Protecting Women and Other Victims of Violence. During September 2025 a legal aid lawyer attended another ERA training seminar entitled European Family Law covering cross-border maintenance orders, motherhood, surrogacy and abortion, and gender identity recognition in the EU.

The Agency reinforced its presence in Gozo through participation in victim support conference held in collaboration with the Victim Support Agency. Strategic collaborations expanded, including partnerships with the Social Care Standards Authority, Victim Support Agency, Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Second Chance Project, and initiated meetings with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, while also engaging in international exchanges with foreign judges and comparative studies on legal aid systems.

Collectively, these initiatives reflect a year of digital transformation, workforce empowerment, service expansion, and strategic engagement, positioning the Agency to deliver stronger, more inclusive legal aid in the years ahead.

² Servizz.gov is the agency bringing all government services together. It is a bridge between the Public Service of Malta and the general public, making government services more accessible.

Language

Malta maintains its established system for providing interpretation and translation whenever a person does not understand the language used by law enforcement authorities or the courts. Interpretation is provided free of charge, covers all stages of the procedure, including communication with legal representative, and is subject to strict confidentiality.

11. Resources of the judiciary (human/ financial/ material), remuneration/ bonuses/ rewards for judges and prosecutors, including observed changes (significant and targeted increase or decrease over the past year).

Remuneration

The salaries of the judiciary have been increased following amendments to the [Judges and Magistrates \(Salaries\) Act \(Chapter 175 of the Laws of Malta\)](#), implemented through the [Judges and Magistrates \(Revision of Salaries\) Order, 2025 \(Legal Notice 11 of 2025\)](#), which was introduced on 17 January 2025. Additionally, a new agreement for judiciary members was concluded, resulting in an improved overall compensation package. The salary of the Attorney General and the State Advocate has also been adjusted proportionately to the increases granted to judiciary members.

Resources

Staffing

The Court Services Agency has significantly strengthened its operational capacity over the past five years. Legal staff increased by 78.5%, rising from 56 in 2020 to 100 in 2025, while overall Agency staffing grew by 41.6% during the same period. This is in addition to the reported increase in the number of members of the judiciary.

The following schema illustrates the notable growth in personnel within the Court Services Agency over this period.

	Total Staff	Legal Staff ³
31/12/2020	418	56
15/11/2025	592	100
Percentage Increase	41.6%	78.5%

Infrastructural Upgrades

Infrastructural upgrades continued to enhance the capacity and efficiency of the Court Services Agency. A new hall was constructed within the main court building, fully equipped for trials by jury, enabling two concurrent trials by jury to be celebrated at the same time (seventeen trials by jury were held and concluded till the end of 2025 compared to a total of six in 2024).

The Court Services Agency also acquired new premises which is hosting the offices both for the inquiring Magistrates and their respective staff members, registry, boardroom and even a court Hall.

The Agency also acquired another two premises that are still under development, with an aim for these premises to host the Commercial Court and the Family Court respectively.

Another significant investment is being undertaken in Gozo's justice infrastructure with the new courthouse project in Victoria. In November 2025, the Government signed an agreement for a new site, which will be re-developed into a modern, accessible Courthouse. Works are scheduled to be completed within three years, with the new facility expected to open by the end of 2028. This project will address issues of space and accessibility, ensuring that Gozo's courts meet contemporary standards for both the public and legal professionals alike.

³ Included also in 'Total Staff'.

These infrastructural improvements are supported by sustained budgetary commitments, including investments under the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the Digital Justice Strategy 2022–2027, which continue to reinforce digital transformation, modernisation, and overall system competitiveness.

12. Training of justice professionals (including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, court staff, clerks/trainees).

Judiciary

In 2025, the Judicial Studies Committee (JSC) organised over thirty training sessions for members of the judiciary, covering topics such as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Brussels I Regulation, the Rome I Regulation, Probation and Parole, electronic evidence, combatting and preventing corruption cases, Competition Law, combatting money laundering and terrorist financing, administrative law, sessions on procedural safeguards in criminal proceedings, sessions on international criminal cooperation and also sessions on AI in Criminal Justice.

Under the Chief Justice's guidance, the JSC remains committed to providing ongoing, effective training to keep the judiciary abreast of current and emerging legal challenges, including EU law.

Throughout the year, the JSC continued to collaborate closely with the Academy of European Law (ERA) and the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) to organise training conferences and seminars. The JSC also made use of the Council of Europe Programme on Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals over 2025.

Prosecutors

The Office of the Attorney General's continued on its commitment to the professional development of its staff. The number of training sessions has grown significantly, from 9 sessions in 2020 to **112 in 2025**, reflecting a proactive approach to adapting to evolving legal landscapes. Training is provided to prosecutors on a wide array of topics, featuring both in-house and external trainers and guest speakers. Prosecutors from the Office of the Attorney General are also permanent representatives to several EU networks including the European Judicial Network on criminal matters.

The 103 training sessions for prosecutors referred provided in 2025, totalling 710 hours, where focused on financial crime, including money laundering and tax evasion; financing of terrorism, asset recovery; corruption; cryptocurrencies; cybercrime; drug offences; artificial intelligence; ethics; human rights; environmental law and cultural heritage; advocacy and public speaking and trafficking in human beings.

Additionally, administrative staff participated in 9 training events throughout 2025 gaining a total of 53 hours of training.

Court Staff

Training for court staff is organised periodically by the Court Services Agency. The Agency has an allocated yearly budget for such training, which during 2025 included:

- Induction courses for newly recruited staff members.
- EJTN lunchtime webinars for Court Attorneys, Assistant Registrars, Senior Executives and Judicial Assistants;
- EJTN training courses for Court Attorneys, Assistant Registrars, Senior Executives, Judicial Assistants, Managers
- ERA seminars for Court Management and Deputy Registrars
- Video Conferencing User Workshops for Messengers;
- Training on Anti-Money Laundering for Deputy Registrars;
- Training on Human Rights for Assistant Registrars and Deputy Registrars
- Language courses for Clerical staff; and

- Information sessions on Children’s Rights/domestic violence/human rights

Apart from this, study visits were also organised by the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) to key institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg.

13. Digitalisation (e.g. use of digital technology, including electronic communication and AI tools, within the justice system and with court users, procedural rules, access to judgments online).

Reference should be made to the information on the Digital Justice Strategy in the context of the response to Recommendation 2.

14. Use of assessment tools and standards (e.g. ICT systems, including AI-based systems, for case management, court statistics and their transparency, monitoring, evaluation, surveys among court users or legal professionals).

Reference should be made to the information on the Digital Justice Strategy in the context of the response to Recommendation 2.

15. Geographical distribution and number of courts/jurisdictions (“judicial map”) and their specialisation, in particular, specific courts or chambers within courts to deal with fraud and corruption cases.

There are no new developments to report.

16. Specialisation (of judges/specific courts/chambers within courts) and training for the judiciary to deal with commercial cases, as well as alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and mediation as regards commercial cases.

Reference should be made to the information provided in previous sections.

C. Efficiency of the Justice System

Reference should be made to the information provided in the context of the response to Recommendation 2.

II. Anti-Corruption Framework

A. The Institutional Framework Capacity to Fight Against Corruption (prevention and investigation/prosecution)

17. List any changes as regards relevant authorities (e.g. national agencies, bodies) in charge of prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of corruption and the resources allocated to each of these authorities (the human, financial, legal, and technical/specialised resources relevant) including the cooperation among domestic and with foreign authorities. Indicate any relevant measure taken to effectively and timely cooperate with OLAF and EPPO.

Permanent Commission Against Corruption (PCAC)

In 2025, the PCAC strengthened its operational capacity through the establishment of a digital registry, updated Standard Operating Procedures, and the recruitment of three additional officers, increasing administrative capacity by 300%. While no cases met the legal threshold for prosecution, these measures have enhanced the PCAC's ability to detect, examine, and manage potential corruption cases efficiently. Renovations to the PCAC's new premises in Valletta are ongoing, ensuring a fully operational and modern working environment for 2026 and beyond.

The Commission maintains close cooperation with domestic authorities, including the Police and FIAU, and is developing formal protocols for timely collaboration with OLAF and EPPO.

It is also pertinent to clarify, in relation to what was reported in the *2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Malta*, that since its establishment—and following the amendments to the Permanent Commission Against Corruption Act (Chapter 326 of the Laws of Malta) in 2020—the Commission has not transmitted any case to the Attorney General for prosecution, for the sole reason that none of the matters it examined involved sufficient suspicion or evidence capable of meeting the threshold of proof beyond reasonable doubt.

Malta Police Force (MPF)

During 2025, the MPF initiated significant infrastructure renovations to strengthen operational integrity and compliance. Two purpose-built sites are currently being renovated to establish distinct, best practice facilities for inventory and evidence storage. Concurrently, the MPF is progressing with the acquisition of inventory management software designed to enhance traceability, secure handling, and governance of evidentiary material.

The MPF has also identified a central site for the Registry and Archives and is finalising the shelving contract to ensure secure, controlled preservation of critical records. Building on this initiative, the MPF is testing a comprehensive digitisation programme for administrative workflows and has issued a tender for a Records Management System (RMS). These measures aim to enhance integrity, traceability, and accessibility of information, reinforcing transparent governance.

To further reinforce governance and oversight, the MPF has advanced the expansion of its internal audit and compliance capacity through successive recruitment initiatives for an Internal Audit Director, Assistant Director, and Compliance Officers.

Additionally, the MPF is assessing the deployment of AI-enabled tools to strengthen transparent and equitable allocation of overtime and extra duty assignments. This initiative seeks to promote robust governance and integrity across operational practices.

Until 31 December 2025, the Professional Standards Office has investigated 194 cases. Of these, 4 cases are currently being heard before the local courts, 11 cases were referred to the Public Service Commission, and 30 cases resulted in minor disciplinary actions.

This operational output reflects the increasing effectiveness of the MPF's *Break the Silence* internal reporting system,⁴ which continues to gain confidence across all ranks. The system is actively promoted through continuous professional development, targeted lectures, internal circulars, and periodic reminders disseminated via all official communication channels, ensuring that officers remain aware of both its availability and its protections.

The system has already demonstrated tangible outcomes, including three high-profile disciplinary and criminal investigations in 2025, all of which originated from *Break the Silence* reports:

- i. Assistant Police Chief for Organised Crime suspended following allegations of abuse, with the investigation triggered by an anonymous *Break the Silence* report in November 2025, as publicly reported at <https://timesofmalta.com/article/high-ranking-police-office-suspended-following-allegations-abuse.1119473>.
- ii. Police Superintendent compelled to resign following allegations relating to misappropriation of police-issued boots, first raised through internal reporting and subsequently actioned by Professional Standards, as reported at <https://timesofmalta.com/article/police-superintendent-forced-resign-pair-boots.1112891>.
- iii. Police Inspector suspended over alleged harassment of two female officers through sexually charged messages, with the matter traced back to anonymous intelligence and later substantiated through internal investigation, as reported at <https://timesofmalta.com/article/inspector-allegedly-harassed-two-female-officers-text-sexual-nature.1108837>.

Overall, *Break the Silence* is now a well-established integrity tool within the Malta Police Force. Its secure design, rapid response commitment, and proven investigative impact support a culture where officers can report misconduct without fear of reprisal. This strengthens internal accountability, improves public confidence in policing standards, and reinforces the Force's practical commitment to the rule of law.

The **Disciplinary Board** remained active in hearing appeals related to minor offences, as listed in the Second Schedule of the Police Act (Chapter 164 of the Laws of Malta) ensuring that procedural fairness is maintained where prejudiced interests are claimed. The number of sittings and cases decided by the Disciplinary Board in recent years is being reproduced below:

Year	Number of Sitzings Held	Number of Cases Decided
2020	6	101
2021	3	48
2022	15	156
2023	10	97
2024	9	121
2025	7	87

⁴ *Break the Silence* provides a secure, anonymous reporting method that allows officers to pass intelligence or raise concerns directly with the Professional Standards Office within MPF, while preserving the sender's identity. The dedicated mailbox is hosted on ProtonMail and is completely independent from MPF network infrastructure. ProtonMail is based in Switzerland, with servers located in Switzerland and subject to strict Swiss privacy laws, and operates a zero-access encryption architecture, meaning message content is encrypted end to end and cannot be accessed by third parties. Officers who wish to maximise anonymity are encouraged to use their own ProtonMail account, which requires no personal details to create and does not retain IP logs by default. Professional Standards commits to respond to all *Break the Silence* contacts within 48 hours and, where necessary, to follow up through the same encrypted channel to develop the original intelligence and obtain additional detail.

Training within the Malta Police Force

The MPF continued to carry out training to its personnel in line with the obligations of the Police Act. The following training was provided in 2025:

Name of Training	Topics	Number of Attendees
48th Basic Training Course (Ongoing From 2024)	1. Fundamental Rights	51
	2. Ethics, Diversity & Professional Standards	
	3. Hate Crime	
49th Basic Training Course (Ongoing From 2024)	1. Fundamental Rights	36
	2. Ethics, Diversity & Professional Standards	
	3. Hate Crime	
50th Basic Training Course	1. Fundamental Rights	37
	2. Ethics, Diversity & Professional Standards	
	3. Hate Crime	
51st Basic Training Course (Ongoing)	1. Fundamental Rights	52
	2. Ethics, Diversity & Professional Standards	
	3. Hate Crime	
Course Leading to the Promotion of Police Sergeant	1. Fundamental Human Rights & Ethics	19
	2. Police Code of Ethics	
16th Officer Cadets	1. Fundamental Human Rights	10
	2. Ethics & Policies	
Reserve Police Constables Induction Course	1. Policies, Procedures & Police Ethics	30
In- Service: Theory	1. Policies and Procedures; and Police Ethics	315
	2. Hate Crime	
	3. Supporting Individuals with Mental Health Issues	
In- Service: Practical	Topics in relation to subject	541
Diploma in Policing (15th Officer Cadets)	Fundamental Human Rights Ethics Laws and Constitutional Law	7
Diploma in Policing (16th Officer Cadets)	Fundamental Human Rights Ethics Laws and Constitutional Law	10
	1. Code of Ethics	26

Training for New Members of CPT	2. Awareness on Mental Health Conditions	
Understanding Of Hate Communication: For a Positive and Inclusive Service	A comprehensive understanding of what is hate speech and hate crime	39
Police Discrimination and Hate Crime	Topics in relation to subject	12
Train the Trainer - Training Against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement (TAHCLE)	Topics in relation to subject	
Conference on Preventing and Combatting Hate Crime	Topics in relation to subject	1

To ensure uniformity across the Force, this training is supplemented by Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which are either issued or updated by the MPF from time to time. The newly introduced SOPs include:

- i. **SOP-SIS on Management of Schengen Information System Alerts (Restricted), issued on 12 January 2025:** Regulates how SIS alerts are created, managed, searched, and actioned, including match handling and SIRENE coordination.
- ii. **SOP-ESR on End of Shift Report (Restricted), issued on 19 February 2025:** Standardises end-of-shift operational reporting and supervision within districts.
- iii. **SOP-RFI on Requests for Attendance, Information and Documents (Restricted), issued on 19 February 2025:** Sets procedures for Article 355AD requests to compel attendance, information, or document production during investigations.
- iv. **SOP-IED on Information Exchange Directive 2023/977 (Restricted), issued on 22 February 2025:** Implements EU police information exchange rules, timelines, and SPOC routing via IRU.
- v. **SOP-ABT on Alcohol Breath Testing (Unrestricted), issued on 24 March 2025:** Defines lawful and evidential breath testing procedures, device control, suspect rights, and documentation.
- vi. **POL-GEP on Gender Equality Plan 2025–2030 (Unrestricted), issued on 29 March 2025:** Sets Force strategy, governance, and KPIs for gender equality, inclusion, and harassment prevention.
- vii. **SOP-GNF on Management of the Malta Police General Fund and Police Burials (Unrestricted), issued on 8 April 2025:** Governs General Fund benefits, committee oversight, and police burial entitlements.
- viii. **SOP-FCI on Financial Crime Investigations (Unrestricted), issued on 22 May 2025:** Provides the framework for parallel financial investigations, asset tracing, and proceeds-of-crime action.
- ix. **SOP-STG on Use of Spit Guard (Unrestricted), issued on 26 May 2025:** Regulates necessity, proportionality, safety restrictions, and reporting for spit guard use.
- x. **SOP-DVA on Domestic Violence Panic Alarm (Unrestricted), issued on 29 June 2025:** Sets eligibility, issuance, monitoring, response, and discontinuation procedures for DV panic alarms.
- xi. **SOP-PLA on Permits, Licences and Applications (Unrestricted), issued on 21 July 2025:** Standardises processing of administrative permits and licences, including event-related and other Force-issued permits.

- xii. **SOP-WSM on Wanted and Missing Alerts (Restricted), issued on 10 August 2025:** Creates a single Force process for issuing, circulating, and closing wanted or missing person alerts, including SIS and INTERPOL pathways.
- xiii. **SOP-TOR on Use of Torch (Unrestricted), issued on 18 August 2025:** Governs safe operational torch use as an illumination tool with strict limits on misuse.
- xiv. **SOP-RES on Use of Restraints (Unrestricted), issued on 25 August 2025:** Defines when and how restraints may be applied, including prohibitions and welfare safeguards.
- xv. **SOP-ROL on Units' Remits and Objectives (Unrestricted), issued on 26 August 2025:** Codifies formal unit remits and objectives to clarify ownership and coordination across pillars.
- xvi. **SOP-JUR on Jurisdiction, Report-Taking and Case Ownership (Unrestricted), issued on 30 September 2025:** Standardises report intake, Malta nexus tests, cross-border referral, and investigative ownership rules.
- xvii. **SOP-EES on Access to Information Stored in the Entry/Exit System for Law Enforcement Purposes (Restricted), issued on 8 October 2025:** Regulates lawful access to EES data for serious crime and terrorism investigations via the Central Access Point.
- xviii. **SOP-RPU on Roads Policing (Unrestricted), issued on 25 October 2025:** Sets Force-wide roads policing priorities and procedures for enforcement and RTC management.
- xix. **POL-ICP on Integrated Communication Policy (Unrestricted), issued on 12 November 2025:** Governs internal and external communications, media engagement, social media use, and crisis messaging.

In addition to the issuance and revision of these SOPs and Policies, the MPF has also developed an AI-supported chatbot to enhance day-to-day operational compliance. The Force recognises that modern policing requires an extensive and continually expanding body of Standard Operating Procedures and Policies. While this breadth is necessary to provide precise guidance and legally sound procedures, it can also make rapid reference difficult during operational decision-making. The chatbot therefore serves as a practical support tool, enabling officers to pinpoint relevant provisions quickly, clarify procedural expectations in real time, and reduce uncertainty when addressing common or urgent operational queries. This initiative strengthens accessibility to governance frameworks, promotes consistent application of standards, and reinforces the Force's commitment to professionalism, accountability, and the rule of law.

The MPF has also developed a separate AI-supported chatbot aimed at serving the general public (available [here](#)). This public-facing tool is intended to improve accessibility to MPF services by guiding users to the appropriate channels, offices, and procedures, especially in relation to reporting incidents and seeking police assistance. The Force recognises that members of the public often require clear, immediate direction on how and where to submit reports, what information is needed, and which services are available to them. The chatbot addresses this need by providing reliable, consistent signposting in plain language, reducing barriers to engagement and improving the overall service experience.

During 2025, the MPF also conducted **263** drug screening tests, resulting in 2 positive cases. Both cases led to precautionary suspension and serious disciplinary action.

Financial Crimes Investigations Department (FCID)

The FCID within MPF has continued to strengthen its organisational structure, with a particular focus on increasing its staffing levels, as detailed in the table below. The following table provides an overview of the increase in staff complement and related costs of the FCID:

Date	FCID Staff complement	Percentage increase in staff complement	Yearly total FCID Gross Pay in (in €)	Percentage increase in expenditure

31.12.2018	53	-	1,151,227.00	-
31.11.2025	107	102% when compared to 2018	€ 2,060,598.97	79% when compared to 2018

The FCID's annual gross pay has significantly risen due to the introduction of exclusive allowances for the Department. This strategy aims to retain current staff and attract top talent, aligning their compensation with that of their counterparts within the civil service.

The Department's staff complement as of 31 December 2025 represents an increase of around **102%** since **31 December 2018**.

	Operational Expenditure (excluding Emoluments)	Capital Expenditure
2018	€894,718	N/A
2019	€1,414,994	N/A
2020	€2,295,138	€1,253,482 ⁵
2021	€3,518,331	€134,093
2022	€3,269,367	€101,031
2023	€2,150,424	€175,753
2024	€1,952,893	€ 151,590.44
2025	€2,531,100	€ 179,478.33

Internal Audit and Investigation Department (IAID)

For 2025, the allocated budget amounted to € 3,215,900. The head count continues to be at 39 personnel, including the Director-General, 32 auditing officers, 1 legal officer and 5 administrative staff members. In addition, another 2 auditing personnel are in the process to be recruited.

Financial Investigations

During 2025, the Financial Investigations Directorate (FID) within the IAID assessed 31 alleged cases in terms of the Internal Audit and Financial Investigations Act (Chapter 461 of the Laws of Malta), which cases were received from various sources, including anonymously and from other National Authorities. 19 cases have been concluded, whereas 12 cases are still being assessed. The majority of the closed cases related to infringements of the Public Procurement Regulations. Other cases included abuse of public funds and forged documentations.

Internal Audits

During 2025, the Internal Audit and Risk Management Directorate within IAID completed ten (10) internal audit assignments and the findings were communicated to the respective Permanent Secretaries. An additional four (4) internal audit assignments are in progress, two (2) of which are at an advanced stage of completion and are expected to be finalised during Q1 2026.

Awareness Raising

⁵ The 2020 capital expenditure was extraordinary since it included one-off major expenses related to the relocation to the current FCID premises such as new furniture, software and IT equipment, hence the difference between 2020-2021.

IAID participated in the 2025 Freshers' Week, which took place at the University of Malta (UoM) and at the Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology (MCAST). Throughout the event, IAID representatives engaged with visiting students and provided an overview of the Department's role within the Public Service. Additional guidance was offered to Accounting and Finance students, who were also encouraged to apply for the Institute for the Public Services (IPS) Student Trainee Scheme. The latter offers students the opportunity to gain valuable practical experience within IAID through flexible working arrangements. Students were further notified that participation in this Scheme would be considered an asset should they choose to apply for future IAID vacancies. In preparation for the event, IAID procured branded merchandise to be distributed at its information stand. Additionally, the Department produced a subtitled video, amongst others on its role, mission and employment opportunities, which was displayed throughout the event at both UoM and MCAST.

Training

Event Title	Organiser	Country	Dates
Audit Masters - 10th Annual Internal Audit Forum	Global Leading Conferences (GCL)	Italy	20-21 May 25
Annual Conference on European Public Procurement Law	ERA	Germany	20 21 March 2025
Technical Workshop on Digital Anti-Fraud Tools	OLAF	Romania	20 to 23 May 2025
State Aid law and grant allocation: A comprehensive and practical seminar for EU Professionals	SEEU Academy	Republic of Ireland	19-21 May 2025
Shaping the EU Anti-fraud Landscape	OLAF	Finland	11-12 June 2025
TAIEX Study Visit on Methodologies for Financing Not Linked to Costs	SID - MFI Malta	Estonia	9-10 October 2025
21st Meeting of DG REGIO Transnational Network (TN) on Simplification - 27 and 28 November 2025 - Prague	DG Regio	Czech Republic	27-28 November 2025

National Coordinating Committee on Combating Money Laundering and Funding of Terrorism

During 2025, the National Coordinating Committee on Combating Money Laundering and Funding of Terrorism (NCC) continued in its efforts aimed to enhancing the understanding of money laundering, terrorist financing, proliferation financing, and targeted financial sanctions among law enforcement and supervisory authorities. The NCC conducted a total of 14 training sessions and workshops throughout the year, as detailed in the table below.

Date of training	Title of training	No of participants	Authorities participating
14 February 2025	Information session on the new EU AML Legislative Package	119	Office of the Attorney General Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit Malta Financial Services Authority Malta Gaming Authority Malta Business Registry Sanctions Monitoring Board Malta Police Force Malta Tax & Customs Administration
25 April 2025	Workshop between the MTCA, the AGO, & the FCID	47	Office of the Attorney General Malta Tax & Customs Administration Malta Police Force
19 May 2025	Workshop on Targeted Financial Sanctions	43	Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit Malta Financial Services Authority Malta Gaming Authority Malta Tax & Customs Administration Malta Police Force Sanctions Monitoring Board Asset Recovery Bureau Malta Business Registry Office of the Attorney General Malta Shipping Registry Department of Commerce - Trading Licensing Unit Identity Malta Aġenzija Komunita' Malta Malta Freeport Terminals Malta Freeport Corporation Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations
21-22 May 2025	Training to the Office of the AG: Proceeds of Crime Act & Best Practices on Terrorism Financing	16	Office of the Attorney General
23 May 2025	Workshop on Best Practices in Terrorism Financing Cases	19	Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit Asset Recovery Bureau Malta Tax & Customs Administration Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations Malta Police Force Office of the Attorney General Office of the State Advocate Malta Security Service

23 May 2025	Workshop in the National Framework of the Freezing and Confiscation Regime	23	Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit Asset Recovery Bureau Malta Tax & Customs Administration Malta Police Force Office of the Attorney General Office of the State Advocate Malta Business Registry
14-15 July 2025	Training for the Prosecutors from the Office of the Attorney General	23	Office of the Attorney General
16 July 2025	Workshop on Confiscation between the Office of the Attorney General, the Malta Police Force, and the Asset Recovery Bureau	22	Office of the Attorney General Malta Police Force Asset Recovery Bureau
20-22 August 2025	Advocacy Training	13	Office of the Attorney General
20-22 October 2025	Training for the ARB on Crypto and Financial Investigations, Asset Management, and Confiscations	19	Asset Recovery Bureau
21-22 October 2025	Workshop on the National Confiscation Framework	42	Asset Recovery Bureau Office of the Attorney General Office of the State Advocate Malta Police Force Malta Tax & Customs Administration Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit
24-26 November 2025	Workshop on Sanctions, Proliferation, and Proliferation Financing	53	Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit Malta Gaming Authority Malta Financial Services Authority Malta Police Force Office of the Attorney General Transport Malta National Foreign Direct Investment Screening Trade Licensing Unit Sanctions Monitoring Board Malta Tax & Customs Administration

25-26 November 2025	Workshop on OSINT for AML/CFT & Sanctions	26	Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit Malta Gaming Authority Malta Financial Services Authority Malta Police Force Transport Malta Trade Licensing Unit Sanctions Monitoring Board Malta Tax & Customs Administration Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations Malta Business Registry
27 November 25	Workshop on Criminal Investigation and Prosecution of TFS and Trade-related Sanctions	19	Malta Police Force Sanctions Monitoring Board Office of the Attorney General Malta Tax & Customs Administration

Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit (FIAU)

After several years of rapid expansion, 2025 was a year of consolidation for the FIAU. With a budget of €11.7 million (a modest increase from the €11.5 million in 2024), the staff complement remained unchanged, allowing the organisation to consolidate expertise, strengthen internal processes, and prepare for the next phase of growth. In 2026, the FIAU's budget is set to rise to €16.5 million, paving the way for a rise in staffing levels and the introduction of new specialist roles to further strengthen its capabilities and respond more effectively and efficiently to the demands of a rapidly evolving AML/CFT environment.

Between 1 January 2025 and 30 November 2025, the FIAU conducted a total of 142 AML/CFT supervisory interventions, representing an increase from the previously reported 130 cases in 2024. Additionally, in line with the FIAU's ongoing strategy, which includes enhancing transparency, the FIAU's Supervision Section published its [AML/CFT Supervisory Plan 2025-2026](#) which outlines the sectors and areas the FIAU will be giving priority to in terms of its risk-based supervisory efforts.

In parallel, the Supervision Section progressed on key projects aimed at strengthening its overall supervisory framework. This included the revision of the risk assessment methodology for subject persons, allowing for better supervisory planning and appropriate coverage of the highest risk-rated subject persons. This revision is also part of the work being undertaken by the FIAU in preparation for the eventual implementation of a single risk methodology at the EU level as part of the AML Package. Moreover, the Section also finalised the mapping of the AML/CFT breaches that can arise from the current AML/CFT legislative instruments applicable in Malta and fed the results into the new Compliance Management System (CMS) currently being developed by the UNODC on behalf of the FIAU. The CMS will encompass both supervision and enforcement modules, enabling the recording of findings emanating from supervisory interventions at a granular level in line with the outcomes of the mapping exercise, as well as any resulting breaches that may be determined by the FIAU at a later stage in the supervisory process.

Enforcement actions taken after identifying breaches during AML/CFT examinations totalled 10 administrative measures during 2025, while a further 55 warning letters were issued for late or non-replies to requests for information or late submissions/failure to submit periodical reporting to the FIAU (as at 4 December 2025). The chart below depicts the quantum of administrative fines for non-compliant subject persons between 2020 and 2025.

Year	Total administrative pecuniary fines in €
2019	€3.9 million
2020	€4.6 million
2021	€12.3 million
2022	€3.3 million
2023	€3.3 million
2024	€0.7million ⁶
2025 (as at 4 December 2025)	€1.3million

The FIAU's Intelligence Analysis Section has reported a steady increase in the number of suspicious reports (STRs/SARs) received over the years. In 2020, the section received 5,175 reports, which grew to 7,218 in 2021, 8,586 in 2022, 9,157 in 2023 and 9,430 in 2024. This upward trend continued in 2025, with the FIAU receiving 9,893 STRs/SARs (up till 30 November 2025).

Disseminations to foreign counterpart FIUs rose from 4,101 disseminations in 2020 to 5,557 disseminations in 2024. In 2025, the total number of disseminations stands at 4,227 (until 30 November 2025). Domestic disseminations, that is, to the Malta Police Force (MPF) and the Malta Tax and Customs Administration (MTCA) (previously referred to as the Commissioner for Revenue) are illustrated in the below table:

Year	Disseminations to MPF	Disseminations to MTCA
2018	79	198
2019	102	186
2020	173	199
2021	328	703
2022	342	401
2023	390	644
2024	493	565
2025 (until 30 November 2025)	412	452

⁶ In 2024, the FIAU, together with the State Advocate, faced a number of constitutional challenges in which the FIAU's power to issue pecuniary administrative penalties and the processes leading to these penalties were declared unconstitutional by the Court of First Instance, specifically the First Hall, Civil Court (Constitutional Jurisdiction). These rulings impeded the enforcement of administrative penalties, resulting in a decrease in the total value of pecuniary penalties issued in 2024. Instead, during this year, the FIAU mainly focused on the implementation of remedial directives issued on Subject Persons to remedy any identified shortcomings. Nonetheless, as explained further in point 30 below, these decisions by the Court of First Instance were ultimately overturned by the Constitutional Court in November 2024. The Constitutional Court ruled that both the process and the FIAU's powers to impose administrative penalties are consistent with the Constitution of Malta and Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Despite such favourable rulings, the FIAU seized the opportunity to implement a number of enhancements to its enforcement framework, with a particular emphasis on reinforcing transparency, fairness and supervisory effectiveness. It is important to note that Court rulings/decisions have an inter-partes effect and thus, their applicability is limited to the parties to the specific case. Consequently, other constitutional cases are still ongoing to date, however, it is noteworthy that no new constitutional cases were initiated against the FIAU in 2025.

It is noteworthy that the slight decline in disseminations from 2024 to 2025 reflects the adoption of an updated prioritisation metric utilised by the Intelligence Analysis Section which further refined its risk-based approach.

The Cash Restriction Section continued to strengthen its internal policies and procedures to ensure effective monitoring and enforcement of the Use of Cash (Restriction) Regulations. The Section's efforts yielded 308 reports of suspected breaches since the start of its operations in 2021, with 84 of which received in 2025 (as at 30 November 2025).

Out of the said 308 reports, 119 cases have been concluded so far, with 45 of which being closed at preliminary assessment stage, 7 disseminated to other relevant local or foreign authorities, and the other 67 cases underwent full investigation. The latter investigated cases involved 272 individuals linked to 142 transactions, involving 55 vehicles, 31 seacrafts, 39 properties, and 14 other high-value goods (HVGs). From these 67 fully investigated cases, 14 were found to be in breach of the Regulations involving 29 individuals and 16 transactions, with a total cash used in excess of the €10,000 threshold amounting to €249,550.

To address these breaches, the FIAU imposed 27 administrative penalties amounting to €58,800, while two additional penalties totalling €3,400 were not acknowledged by the involved parties and were therefore disseminated to the MPF for further criminal action.

Prosecution

Reference should be made to the information on the Office of the Attorney General in the context of the response to Chapter I.

Asset Recovery Bureau (ARB)

In 2025, the Asset Recovery Bureau continued to strengthen its operational capacity through targeted recruitment initiatives aimed at supporting its growing responsibilities. To further enhance internal staff capability, the Bureau issued several calls for applications which resulted in the engagement of a diverse cohort of new personnel. These included four Senior Managers, two of whom were promoted internally, as well as one Manager who was also promoted internally. Additionally, the Bureau recruited four Bureau Officers II, one of whom advanced from an internal role, and four Bureau Officers I, one of whom was promoted internally. Following these appointments, the Bureau also engaged four law students to support legal and administrative functions. This structured and strategic growth reflects the Bureau's commitment to building a robust, skilled, and sustainable workforce capable of meeting its evolving responsibilities.

In addition, during 2025 the Bureau established a new Investigations Unit dedicated to supporting and enhancing asset recovery activities both locally and internationally. The Unit was created to provide specialised investigative capacity, enabling more coordinated and comprehensive efforts in tracing criminal proceeds across jurisdictions. Its operations leverage both formal and informal networks, strengthening the Bureau's ability to pursue complex cases, expedite information exchange, and achieve timely enforcement actions.

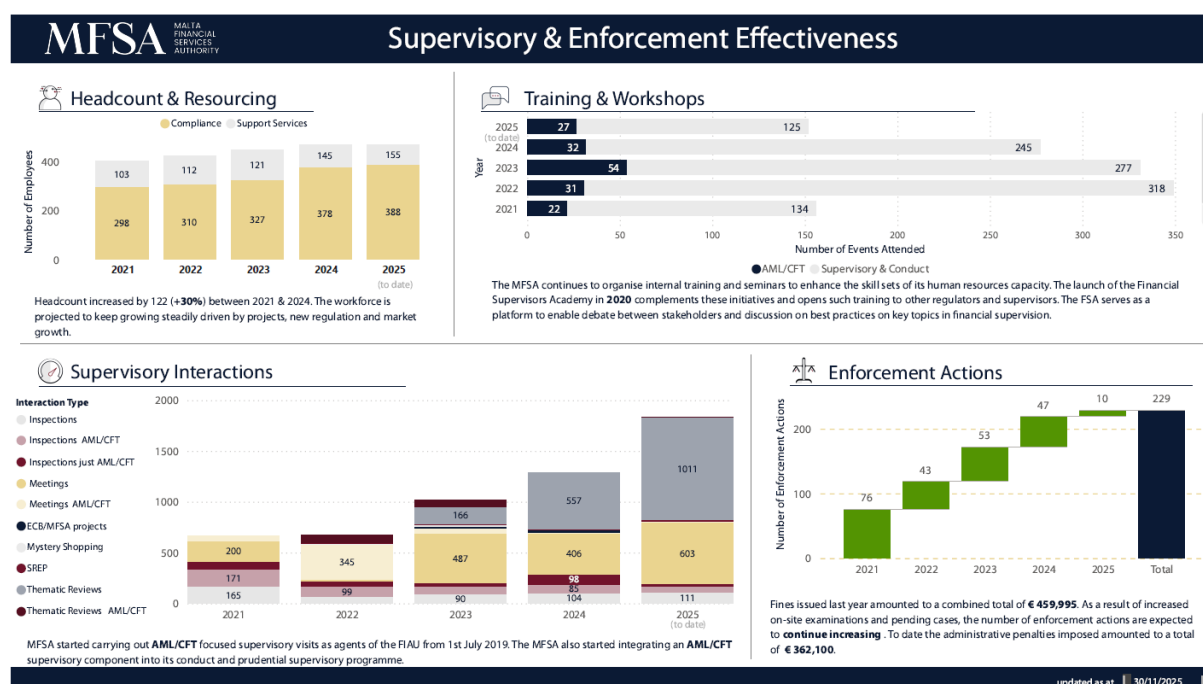
To replace fragmented, largely manual processes and respond to increasingly complex, multi-jurisdictional financial crime, the ARB is implementing a modern central management system (CMS) to centralise case information and streamline workflows. The system will consolidate case data, documents, evidence, communications and asset records in a single secure platform, reducing duplication, improving data quality and enabling faster, more accurate reporting and statistics. The ARB is also exploring API-based interoperability with partner entities to obtain required information accurately and efficiently, without adding administrative burden to counterparts. Five modules have already been developed and underwent comprehensive testing; these are being restructured to reflect operational needs identified during testing and updates. Scoping for the remaining modules has been handed to the developers to finalise the solution. The tender was awarded and signed on 18 September 2024, with full solution delivery scheduled by June 2026. The project is funded by the European Union

through the NextGenerationEU programme under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), as part of “Digitalisation in the Justice System” (REF MT – C[C6] – I[I6] – T[6.39]).

Furthermore, throughout 2025 the entity continued to invest in the professional development of its workforce by sponsoring a range of training initiatives aimed at enhancing skills and ensuring staff remained current with evolving practices in the field. These initiatives included online training programmes, locally delivered courses, and specialised overseas training opportunities. This training, mainly focused on strengthening confiscation expertise through targeted training such as ‘Demystifying Extended Confiscation’ and the ‘Workshop on the National Confiscation Framework’, which improved understanding of national legal tools, extended confiscation mechanisms, and their practical application in complex criminal proceedings. The Bureau also reinforced its technical investigative capabilities through specialised training on ‘Crypto and Financial Investigations’, ‘Asset Management, and Confiscation’, addressing emerging typologies involving virtual assets, financial flows, asset valuation, and post-seizure management. Participation in ‘Moneyval Assessors Training 2025’ further enhanced institutional knowledge of international AML/CFT evaluation methodologies, risk-based assessments, and compliance standards. Additional training covered EU and international cooperation by taking part in sessions with CARIN, ARIN-EA, Europol, Eurojust, and the SIRIUS Project, focusing on cross-border asset recovery, mutual legal assistance, and judicial cooperation.

Malta Financial Services Authority

Below is the [Supervisory and Enforcement Effectiveness](#) dashboard published by the Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA), as at 30 November 2025. The dashboard shows the Authority’s performance and priorities in regulating and enforcing the financial sector, as well as its transformational journey to improve its standards and framework.



Following the launch of the MFSA’s Strategic Statement in 2023, the Authority continued delivering on its ambitious goals. Through 27 strategic priorities grouped under 5 pillars, this Statement sets out the Authority’s long-term objectives and more immediate strategic priorities in the context of the current economic environment. As set out in strategic priority 17, the MFSA actively collaborates with the FIAU, other regulators and law enforcement agencies in its fight in combatting ML/FT and all forms of financial crime. This collaboration also extends to initiatives taken at the inter-institutional and policy level.

As authorised in terms of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and through the establishment of a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding, the Financial Crime Compliance (FCC) function within the MFSA, acts as an agent of the FIAU in conducting supervisory engagements on their behalf. In 2025, FCC conducted a total of 24 examinations delegated by the FIAU, across the various sectors that are supervised by the MFSA.

Other - Statistical Data in Relation to Various Entities

The Government remains dedicated to strengthening the capacity, authority, and accountability of institutions responsible for regulatory and control functions. Detailed below are the allocated budgets for the Office of the Ombudsman, the National Audit Office (NAO), and the Internal Audit and Investigations Directorate (IAID).

National Audit Office

On 14 December 2023, the National Audit Office (NAO) published its five-year strategy (2024-2028), focusing on enhancing accountability and transparency in Government operations, and promoting good governance across the public sector. To implement this Strategy, five Action Teams and a Permanent Working Group have been established to tackle key priorities, with systematic monitoring of their progress to ensure adaptability throughout the five-year term. Key achievements so far include identifying areas for improvement to align with international auditing standards, substantial progress achieved in the revision of the NAO audit manuals, the (almost finalised) revision of the NAO Code of Ethics to reflect evolving professional standards, and the development of a tailored induction course for new recruits. Additionally, the Office has been developing a product to enhance its visibility and audit impact, has explored opportunities for the integration of data analytics and AI in audit work, and formed a working group to secure additional financial resources for strategic initiatives.

The NAO is currently focused on strengthening its human resources capacity to better meet its operational demands and strategic objectives. This initiative includes additional audit staff and investing in training programs to equip the workforce with the necessary knowledge and skills. By investing in its human capital, the NAO aims to build a resilient and capable workforce that can adopt to evolving priorities and ensure high-quality performance in fulfilling its mandate. Additionally, the NAO is currently undertaking a capital project to expand its premises and operational facilities. In fact, the allocation for 2025 is composed of €4,450,000 in recurrent expenditure, and €1,500,000 in capital expenditure.

Increase in the estimate allocated budget over a seven-year term (between the year 2019 and 2025):

Entity	Year						
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
NAO	3,500,000	3,800,000	3,850,000	3,900,000	4,200,000	4,000,000	5,950,000
Ombudsman	1,300,000	1,340,000	1,427,000	1,420,000	1,549,000	1,486,000	2,055,000
IAID	2,273,000	1,956,100	4,084,800	2,860,100	2,508,000	2,559,700	3,215,900

Cooperation with EPPO and OLAF

Operational cooperation between the EPPO and national authorities was further strengthened. The national authorities responsible for collaborating with the EPPO adhered to the pre-established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure timely and effective cooperation.

In terms of information sharing, the FIAU sent a total 6 disseminations in 2025 (up till 30 November 2025). Furthermore, the FIAU collaborates with the EPPO through the exchange of information following the receipt of requests for information. In this respect, the FIAU replied to 1 request for

information received in 2024 and 3 requests for information received this year (up till 30 November 2025).

Moreover, the Financial Investigations Directorate (FID) within the IAID, serving as the Maltese Anti-Fraud Coordination Service (AFCOS), closely assisted and collaborated with OLAF on an unannounced investigation involving Maltese beneficiaries which was conducted in Malta in November 2025.

18. Safeguards for the functional independence of the authorities tasked with the prevention and detection of corruption.

Reference should be made to the information reported under Section 17 of this national contribution.

19. Information on the implementation of measures foreseen in the strategic anti-corruption framework (if applicable). If available, please provide relevant objectives and indicators.

In 2025 further progress was made in the implementation of the Action Plan of the National Anti- Fraud and Corruption Strategy (NAFCS). Action Point 15 in relation to the identification of needs and procurement of software tools was fully completed. IAID compiled a list of software tools being used by the members of the Co-ordinating Committee to assist them in the fight against fraud and corruption, as well as new ones that are required. This list was uploaded in the Central Document Repository System (CDRS).

The following provide an update on the NAFCS Action Points:

- **Action point 1:** The terms of references have been updated and are in the process of being adopted by the Internal Audit Investigation Board foreseen by Q1 2026.
- **Action point 10:** A mailshot will be circulated amongst public officials, Scale 1-5, to be circulated amongst entities, including accounting officers.
- **Action point 12, 17 and 20:** Report completed, with recommendations to be put up to do IAIB by Q1 2026
- **Action Point 18:** A list of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between the members of the Co-ordinating Committee, and other MOUs being negotiated has been compiled.

B. Prevention

20. Measures to enhance integrity in the public sector in particular as regards high-level officials (including as regards incompatibility rules, revolving doors, codes of conduct, ethics).

The Code of Ethics for public officials is set out in the First Schedule to the Public Administration Act (Chapter 595 of the Laws of Malta).

21. Measures to enhance general transparency of public decision-making including rules on lobbying, asset and interest disclosure rules, gifts policy, transparency of political party financing). Please provide information and figures on their application/enforcement, such as number of detected breaches/irregularities of the various rules in place and the follow-up given (investigations, sanctions, etc.).

A reform of the asset-declaration system applicable to all Members of Parliament, as established under the [House of Representatives \(Privileges and Powers\) Ordinance \(Chapter 113 of the Laws of Malta\)](#), is currently underway. This reform will address the observations of the Commissioner for Standards in Public Life, as well as issues identified in the OECD's 2023 report Review of the Asset and Interest

Declaration System in Malta. The updated system will introduce: (i) a single, uniform declaration for all Members of Parliament, removing current distinctions; (ii) more detailed information on the wealth of Members of Parliament and their income, and (iii) a strengthened process for declaring interests, including conflicts of interest.

In the interim, it is important to note that all Members of the Cabinet continue to submit their asset and interest declarations to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and these remain accessible to both the public and the media.

In parallel, the Government is also preparing amendments to the Code of Ethics for Members of Parliament. The changes reflect the proposals made by the Commissioner for Standards in Public Life in 2020 and are intended to strengthen integrity obligations for Members of Parliament.

These proposals are scheduled to be discussed with the Opposition in the coming days before proceeding with the legislative process.

22. Measures to prevent conflicts of interests in the public sector. Please specify the features and scope of their application (e.g. categories of officials concerned, types of checks and corrective measures depending on the category of officials concerned). Please provide information and figures on their application/enforcement, such as number of detected breaches/irregularities of the various rules in place and the follow-up given (investigations, sanctions, etc.).

On 27 November 2023, the Principal Permanent Secretary issued [Directive No. 16](#) entitled ‘Governing Framework for Preventing and Managing Conflicts of Interest in the Public Administration’. The Directive is intended to assist public employees and board members faithfully discharge their duties by successfully managing situations of conflicts of interest, by giving clear guidance through legally binding legislative provisions. Through this Directive, a [Framework for Preventing and Managing Conflicts of Interest in the Public Sector](#) was introduced.

The Framework is aimed at ensuring ethical standards, integrity, and transparency, the framework provides guidelines for identifying, reporting, and managing conflicts of interest—covering areas such as gifts, hospitality, political involvement, pre- and post-public employment, and private work.

Following the entry into force of the Framework on 1 February 2024, all public employees and board members are required to report any actual, potential, or apparent conflict of interest using a dedicated template. This reporting requirement is being centrally and continuously monitored.

Recognising the increasingly complex and fast-paced environment in which public employees operate—and the ethical dilemmas that may arise—the Government also launched the Integrity Awareness Programme. This initiative supports the promotion of the highest standards of ethical behaviour across the public service and is grounded in [Directive 15](#) entitled ‘Governing Policy for Integrity Promotion, Awareness and Assessment for Public Employees’.

Directives issued by the Principal Permanent Secretary carry the force of law by virtue of Article 4(3) of the Public Administration Act.

Throughout 2024 and 2025, Integrity and Awareness Learning Courses were delivered to Executive Secretaries, Assistant Directors, Directors, Directors General, Chief Information Officers, and other officers in Government Scales 3 to 6. A total of 2,393 participants attended these sessions, which included assessments designed to reinforce the knowledge and principles imparted during the training.

Finally, by way of clarification to what was reported in the *2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Malta*, it is pertinent to note that the aforementioned training is provided by the Governance Action Directorate, in collaboration with the Institute for Public Services within the People & Standards Division. The Public Service Commission is not involved whatsoever in training related to integrity.

23. Measures to ensure Whistle-blower protection and encourage reporting of corruption, including their application (i.e. number of reports received, and the follow-up given).

In focusing on the development of whistleblower protection mechanisms, also as part of Malta's Recovery and Resilience Plan commitments, a centralised repository for whistleblowing data is being established to be accessible to all anti-corruption entities. This whistleblowing portal will allow potential whistleblowers to make disclosures in terms of the Protection of the Whistleblower Act, whether in written form or by telephone or by voice message. The system will also allow for the gathering of statistics. Currently, the chosen contractor is finalising the system. A test environment of this database is up and running and the system is expected to be completed by the first quarter of 2026. This initiative ensures that reports of wrongdoing are handled promptly, confidentially and independently, further fostering a culture of accountability and encouraging individuals to come forward without fear of retaliation.

The 2025 anti-fraud training explicitly addressed whistleblowing procedures and safeguards as a core tool for detecting corruption and conflicts of interest. It provided detailed guidance on the Protection of the Whistleblower Act (Chapter 527 of the Laws of Malta), emphasising legal protection against retaliation and encouraging staff to report suspicions in confidence. Reporting channels—including line management, Heads of Ministry or Managing Authorities, IAID (as AFCOS) and online portals—were clearly explained, reinforcing transparency and accountability within public bodies.

24. Specific measures to enhance transparency, integrity and accountability in sectors with high risks of corruption, with a view to monitor and prevent corruption and conflict of interests, and where applicable measures to prevent and address corruption committed by organised crime groups.

- Such high-risk sectors could include: public procurement, including construction, transport/infrastructure, defence, cohesion, agriculture, environment, healthcare, investor residence schemes, large-scale investments of national interest and the spending of EU funds, urban planning.
- In particular, measures to mitigate high risks of corruption in the area of public procurement, such as enhancing transparency and oversight (for example through digital technologies) and promoting fair competition and accountability in public procurement (e.g. targeted actions to address the high share of single bids) and measures to guarantee the effective and independent functioning of the public procurement review bodies.

Malta has continued to strengthen preventive and monitoring measures in sectors exposed to higher risks of corruption—particularly public procurement, EU-funded expenditure, and large-scale public investment—through targeted capacity-building, reinforced conflict-of-interest controls, enhanced data-driven oversight, and strengthened reporting and escalation mechanisms.

To enhance transparency, integrity, accountability and good governance within Public Procurement Procedures, with a view to monitoring and preventing corruption and conflicts of interest in public procurement for almost four (4) years before contract signing, recipients of public tender contracts are required to complete and sign an Ultimate Beneficial Owner (UBO) Declaration Form. In liaison with national competent authorities the said UBO Declaration Form is regularly reviewed to ascertain that its contents are updated in line with the required exigencies.

As of 1 December 2025, the Department of Contracts has introduced the mandatory requirement that Procurement Drafters shall declare (or otherwise) any Conflict of Interest (COI). The compilation of Absence of Conflict-of-Interest Declaration Form shall take place prior the initiation of all Procurement Procedures, irrelevant of their Funding Source. Once filled in and signed, the said COI Declaration Form shall be submitted to the Head of the Contracting Authority/Entity for a formal receipt acknowledgement as well as review of the contents of the COI Declaration Form. This initiative follows the publication of Circular [OPS/OPM-EES/1/2025](#) on 14 April 2025, with the scope of strengthening

oversight and governance of EU-Funded Projects, whilst momentarily preventing, identifying and mitigating Conflict of Interest, as well as detecting and addressing Fraud and Corruption.

This measure is also deemed as a continuation of the long-standing requirement that Tender Evaluation Committee members are bound by the Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality whereby, they declare that they are independent of all parties which stand to gain from the outcome of the evaluation process. The content of the declaration which is agreed to by the Evaluation Committee members also states that to the best of their knowledge and belief, 'there are no facts or circumstances, past or present, or that could arise in the foreseeable future, which might call into question [their] independence in the eyes of any party; and should it become apparent during the course of the evaluation process that such a relationship exists or has been established, [they] will immediately cease to participate in the evaluation process'. The said Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality is integrated as part of the Evaluation Process which is conducted on Government's e-Procurement Platform (ePPS: Electronic Public Procurement System). It is pertinent to note that the ePPS system does not allow any Evaluation Committee member to have access to the actual offers submitted by the bidders, unless the relevant member agrees to the contents of the said Declaration, prior to the commencement of the Evaluation Process undertaken by him/her.

Throughout the years, the Department of Contracts has done its best to develop initiatives and measures to increase effectiveness of Public Procurement Procedures, such as, but not limited to:

- Vetting and Scrutiny Process of the Procurement Document (drawn up by most Contracting Authorities/Entities) by the Department of Contracts, prior Publication;
- Development of Procurement Guideline Documentation and Templates for Contracting Authorities/Entities;
- Declaration of the Absence of Conflict of Interest for the Department of Contracts' Employees;
- Public Procurement Training Sessions (incl. dedicated training session specifically on Anti-Fraud and Corruption);
- Compliance and Monitoring Unit within the Department of Contracts.

Additionally, contracting authorities must comply with the provisions of the Public Procurement Regulations (Subsidiary Legislation 601.03 of the Laws of Malta). These regulations mandate the exclusion of economic operators from participating in public procurement processes if they have a conviction by final judgment relating to involvement in criminal organisations, corruption, fraud, terrorist activities, money laundering, terrorist financing, child labour or human trafficking. The said exclusions of Economic Operators are applicable for procurement procedures above and below EU financial thresholds.

Residence-by-Investment

The Residency Malta Agency—the Government agency responsible for processing Residence by Investment (RBI) applications—operates a continuous-improvement approach to ensure processes keep pace with evolving risks and scenarios while remaining fully compliant with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

In the past year, the Agency formalised and implemented its Risk Appetite Statement. This sets clear appetites and tolerances across the risk categories assessed during RBI processing— including political exposure, bribery and corruption, sanctions, civil and criminal records, source of wealth, and wider reputational risk—thereby standardising how risk is identified, rated and escalated.

The purpose of this risk matrix is to ensure a consistent, standardised, and robust assessment framework, with predefined risk thresholds that form the basis for the compilation of the final application assessment. This assessment summarises the findings arising from internal checks, verifications conducted by the local police authorities, and the outcomes of outsourced background verification reports obtained from reputable specialised international firms. The final assessment is

then submitted to the independent Board of Approvals for a final decision. Moreover, the Agency also invests in structured training—locally and abroad—and routinely attends specialised conferences to maintain up to date with the latest trends and developments.

Urban Planning

The Planning Authority (PA) supports transparent, accountable permitting through its eApplications portal, the principal online system for planning applications that provides real-time information and serves as the official communication channel between the Authority and key stakeholders—including professionals (architects/periti and lawyers), NGOs and the general public. Users can consult comprehensive application materials (proposed developments, site and location plans, supporting studies and related documents), receive automated updates on cases of interest and manage responsibilities via organised to-do lists.

Complementing this, the PA's MapServer GIS gives interactive, near real-time access to integrated planning data—such as applications by site, issued enforcements, planning constraints and topographic layers—enables side-by-side comparison of historical aerial imagery with the basemap, and promotes public engagement by allowing anonymous reporting of suspected illegal development with optional photo uploads. In line with legal-transparency safeguards, all planning application files are open to public inspection except for information protected under the applicable data-protection legislation. Objectors are afforded a statutory minimum of ten days to review the Case Officer's report before the decision hearing, while third parties and NGOs may appeal Planning Authority decisions and access the related documentation. All those involved in the decision-making processes—including Board Members and employees—must declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest in accordance with [Directive No. 16](#). The PA also engages an Internal Auditor to conduct regular process audits to detect irregularities or misuse of power, thereby reinforcing accountability throughout the permitting process.

EU Funds

Throughout 2025, various initiatives were undertaken by the Ministry responsible for EU funds to ensure adequate preventive and monitoring controls over EU-funded expenditure with a view of strengthening anti-fraud and integrity frameworks across EU-funded programmes.

i. Training

Throughout 2025, three training sessions were delivered on the Anti-Fraud Strategy and Cycle, aimed at reinforcing integrity, transparency and accountability across the full lifecycle of EU-funded projects. These sessions targeted new recruits within the Ministry responsible for EU Funds, the Paying Agency, beneficiaries, line ministries, national auditors and Local Action Groups.

Compared to earlier editions, the 2025 training was substantially enhanced to reflect evolving corruption and fraud risks. While the 2024 programme focused on foundational concepts (definitions of fraud and corruption, the anti-fraud cycle, the TFEU legal framework and the principle of zero tolerance), the 2025 programme broadened and deepened its scope by:

- Integrating the concept of irregularities alongside fraud and corruption;
- Embedding EU-level instruments such as the PIF Directive, the EPPO Regulation and Recovery and Resilience Facility obligations;
- Reinforcing the national integrity framework, including the Public Administration Act values, [Directive No. 15](#) on Integrity Promotion, Awareness and Assessment for Public Employees, the Whistleblower Act, and updated national risk assessment outputs.

A key development in 2025 was the operationalisation of conflict-of-interest prevention measures through the introduction of Directive 16 and OPS/OPM EES/1/2025 Circular. These measures mandate systematic conflict-of-interest and UBO verification checks throughout project design, public procurement, payments and recruitment processes, thereby directly addressing corruption and favouritism risks in high-value and high-risk procurement.

The training further strengthened internal control and monitoring mechanisms by formalising a risk-based approach aligned with COSO internal control components and a structured fraud risk assessment methodology (gross, net and target risk), supported by standardised templates. Preventive tools were expanded through the integration of Arachne and data-analytics guidance, while detection and reporting mechanisms were enhanced through comprehensive red-flag catalogues, case studies and clearly defined escalation pathways via IAID/AFCOS, FONDI.eu and EUPA reporting obligations.

A specialised training session on Arachne, the European Commission's data-mining and risk-scoring tool, was provided to Managing Authorities, Intermediate Bodies, the Audit Authority, the Paying Agency and horizontal units. The session covered Arachne's regulatory framework, data architecture and procurement-related indicators, and demonstrated its use for ex-ante checks, ongoing monitoring and programme-level analysis. Participants were emphasised that Arachne enhances but does not replace human oversight.

Additionally, two dedicated 2025 training sessions focused on operationalising conflict-of-interest prevention measures within procurement and project management. These sessions consolidated previous training by integrating legal requirements, data-mining tools and practical procedural guidance into a single cohesive framework. This approach provides strengthened safeguards against corruption, favouritism and organised-crime infiltration in procurement and EU-funded investments. The 2025 training reflected updated Department of Contracts requirements, including mandatory conflict-of-interest declarations for procurement drafters, strengthened UBO obligations and the OPS/OPM EES/1/2025 Circular. It shifted from awareness to practical implementation, providing step-by-step guidance on revised checklists, stricter controls for high-value and high-risk contracts, enhanced documentation standards and the use of expanded data-mining tools such as the Identità database. These measures directly mitigate corruption and organised-crime infiltration risks in public procurement and major investments.

ii. Whistleblowing safeguards as a corruption-detection measure

The 2025 anti-fraud training explicitly addressed whistleblowing procedures and safeguards as a core tool for detecting corruption and conflicts of interest. It provided detailed guidance on the Protection of the Whistleblower Act (Chapter 527), emphasising legal protection against retaliation and encouraging staff to report suspicions in confidence. Reporting channels—including line management, Heads of Ministry or Managing Authorities, IAID (as AFCOS) and online portals—were clearly explained, reinforcing transparency and accountability within public bodies.

25. Measures for the prevention of corruption in relation to the issuing of official permits (e.g. related to environment, energy and various types of construction).

There are no new developments to report.

26. Reporting on the use of digital technologies to enhance transparency and oversight in public procurement.

The Department of Contracts, in its role as the central government authority, is responsible for the maintenance of Government's e-procurement platform known as the electronic [Public Procurement System \(ePPS\)](#).

This web-based collaborative system facilitates the entire procurement lifecycle for both contracting authorities and economic operators, featuring alert notifications and other tools to optimise the process. The ePPS ensures the integrity and competitiveness of public procurement through end-to-end encryption, providing maximum security, confidentiality and accountability.

Key features such as role-based access control, offer encryption and decryption, offer signature through a hash algorithm, user activity audit trails, and timestamping ensure peace of mind for users,

particularly economic operators. The platform operates as a 24/7 one-stop-shop for public contracts, eliminating time and cross-border constraints for potential bidders. Continuous enhancements have made public spending through the ePPS more transparent, evidence-based, optimized, streamlined, and aligned with market conditions.

The ePPS has been mandatory for procurements over €5,000 (excluding VAT) since 2016, as per Public Procurement Regulations. The system covers the entire procurement process, from the initial notification and publication of a call to the evaluation and award stages, including post-contract implementation details. Hence, it provides a full online digitised process.

To enhance data collection and process automation, the Department of Contracts continually integrates new modules such as the European Single Procurement Document (ESPD), eForms, TED Interconnection, Green Public Procurement (GPP) reporting, compliance certificates, adherence to the Energy Efficiency Directive and more. The platform also supports preliminary market consultations and tools like eCERTIS. To improve efficiency and transparency, new modules and features are currently in development such as the Digitisation of the Appeals Process and the introduction of Open Business Intelligence (BI) for Analytical Reporting.

C. Repression

27. The legal framework on criminalisation and sanctions for corruption and related offences, including foreign bribery.

No new developments to report.

28. Official data on the number of investigations, prosecutions, final judgments, and the application of sanctions for corruption offences (differentiated by offence if possible). Please indicate whether the cases: involve legal persons; are related to the implementation of EU or national funds; involve high level corruption. Please indicate which data is publicly available and how policymaking is informed by the data.

<u>2025</u>	
Investigations which initiated as corruption	20
Investigations which initiated as corruption but no corruption resulted	5
Actual number of pending corruption investigations as of 2025, out of the investigations initiated in 2025	15
Investigations initiated in 2025 which led to a prosecution	0
2025 prosecutions which involve corruption	12

29. Potential obstacles identified in law or in practice to the investigation and prosecution of high-level and complex corruption cases (e.g. political immunity regulation, procedural rules, statute of limitations, cross-border cooperation, pardoning).

No new developments to report.

30. Information on effectiveness of non-criminal measures and of sanctions (e.g.: recovery measures and administrative sanctions on both public and private offenders).

National authorities with regulatory and enforcement functions continued to exercise their statutory powers by imposing administrative sanctions.

Throughout 2025, only **one** judgement was decided by Constitutional Court against the Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit (FIAU) in *Online Amusement Solutions Limited (C 53765) vs. Il-Korp għall-Analiżi ta' informazzjoni Finanzjarja u l-Avukat ta' l-Istat*, delivered on 20 October 2025 by the First Hall Civil Court (Constitutional Jurisdiction). The Court concluded that the imposition of hefty financial administrative penalties by the FIAU was deemed in breach of Article 39 (1) of the Constitution.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the FIAU actively engages with subject persons through structured follow-up processes to ensure that enforcement actions lead to tangible improvements, both with respect to the technical compliance and design of their control frameworks, and also in relation to the control effectiveness. In 2024, over 50 meetings were held with subject persons to monitor the implementation of remedial actions, assess progress, and provide the same with the necessary guidance. This proactive approach led to the closure of 20 remedial actions, demonstrating notable improvements in compliance measures. In 2025, the FIAU held 35 meetings and closed off 11 directives (up till 9 December 2025). By fostering continuous collaboration with subject persons, the FIAU reinforces a culture of compliance, emphasising the importance of rectifying deficiencies and maintaining high regulatory standards.

III. Media Pluralism and Media Freedom

A. Media Authorities and Bodies

31. Measures taken to ensure independence, enforcement powers and adequacy of resources of (financial, human and technical) media regulatory authorities and bodies.

Reference should be made to the response to Recommendation 5.

32. Conditions and procedures for the appointment and dismissal of the head/ members of the collegiate body of media regulatory authorities and bodies.

There are no new developments to report.

33. Existence and functions of media councils or other self-regulatory bodies.

There are no new developments to report.

B. Safeguards Against Government or Public Interference and Transparency and Concentration of Media Ownership

34. Measures adopted to ensure the fair and transparent allocation of state advertising.

The European Media Freedom Act (Measures for Implementation) Order established the Office for Advertising and the Media as an independent authority responsible for safeguarding transparency, fairness and accountability in state advertising. The Office is tasked with monitoring and enforcing compliance in relation to advertising practices and the use of public funds in the media sector. To fulfil this role, it is vested with broad investigative and enforcement powers, enabling it to obtain information, examine records, carry out inspections, and take action where irregularities or non-compliance are identified. The obligations include:

- Biannual Reporting: Public authorities and entities using public funds for advertising must report every six months to the Office, detailing state advertising contracts, including the contracted media service provider or online platform, total contract value, and description of services.
- Annual Expenditure Disclosure: Public authorities and entities must provide the Office with information on state advertising expenditure on an annual basis.
- Annual Public Report: The Office must monitor and publish, by 1 April of the following year, an annual report on the allocation of state advertising expenditure. This report must include detailed data and be made publicly available in an easily accessible format, including electronically.
- Enforcement Capacity: The Head of the Office is empowered to require information and documents, conduct investigations (including on-site inspections), and apply sanctions, including administrative penalties, to ensure compliance with reporting and transparency obligations.

35. Safeguards against the state/ political interference, in particular:

- safeguards to ensure editorial independence of media (private and public);
- specific safeguards for the independence of governing bodies heads of management and members of the governing boards of public service media (e.g. related to appointment, dismissal), safeguards for their financial and operational independence (e.g. related to reporting obligations and the allocation of resources) and safeguards for plurality of information and opinions;
- information on specific legal provisions and procedures applying to media service providers including as regards granting/renewal/termination of licences, company operation, capital entry requirements, concentration and corporate governance.

The European Media Freedom Act (Measures for Implementation) Order introduces enforceable protections for editorial independence in full alignment with the European Media Freedom Act. These include:

- Protection of Journalistic Sources: A prohibition on national authorities taking measures that would oblige disclosure of information capable of identifying journalistic sources or confidential communications, including from persons connected professionally or regularly to a media service provider.
- Ban on Coercive Measures: National authorities are prohibited from detaining, sanctioning, intercepting, inspecting, or subjecting media service providers and relevant persons to surveillance, search or seizure for the purpose of obtaining information related to sources and confidential communications.
- Ban on Intrusive Surveillance Software: Deployment of intrusive surveillance software on devices used by media service providers, editorial staff and connected persons for source-related purposes is expressly banned.
- Structured Derogation Framework: Where derogations are explicitly permitted, safeguards apply, such as immediate review of warrants by the Commissioner under the Security Service Act, and regular review mechanisms.
- Judicial Protection: Individuals have the right to effective judicial protection before the First Hall of the Civil Court, including the possibility of in camera hearings.

The European Media Freedom Act (Measures for Implementation) Order also introduces safeguards to enhance the independence of public service media governance such as:

- Merit-Based, transparent Appointment: The Chief Executive Office of the public service media provider is appointed through an open call and competitive process, with published selection criteria.
- Judicial Review of Dismissals: Premature dismissal of the CEO or the management board members is subject to judicial review on points of facts and law before the First Hall of the Civil Court.
- Independent Monitoring: The Broadcasting Authority is the body designated to carry out the EMFA monitoring for public service media.

In addition, the Order strengthens the overall system of safeguards that support plurality and reduce risks of indirect influence (including via state advertising), through transparency, reporting and public disclosure mechanisms overseen by the Office for Advertising and the Media.

Additional legislative updates related to media service providers introduced through the European Media Freedom Act (Measures for Implementation) Order include:

- Broadcasting Authority Responsibilities: The Broadcasting Authority is designated to carry out EMFA tasks assigned to national regulatory authorities and may consider opinions issued by the European Board for Media Services.
- Gathering of Information and Enforcement: The Broadcasting Authority is empowered to request proportionate and necessary information or data to fulfil EMFA functions. Non-compliance with such requests constitutes an offence and may attract fines.

- Plurality Assessment in Broadcasting Act Decisions: Before authorising certain measures, the Broadcasting Authority must assess the effects on competition, consumer choice, and overall plurality of viewpoints, and incorporate this assessment into its decision-making process.
- Regulatory Clarity: Amendments to the Media and Defamation Act (Chapter 579 of the Laws of Malta) introduce and harmonise definitions, such as definitions of 'editorial control', 'media service' and 'media service provider', to ensure consistent application of media rules in line with the EMFA.

36. Transparency of media ownership and public availability of media ownership information, including on direct, indirect and beneficial owners.

The European Media Freedom Act (Measures for Implementation) Order mandates the creation of a national media ownership database. Ownership information must be made accessible and regularly updated in line with Article 6(1) EMFA must also be submitted to the Media Registrar (established under the Media and Defamation Act). Together with the Head of the Office, the Registrar is tasked with developing a national database that is to be made publicly available by electronic means.

C. Framework for Journalists' Protection, Transparency and Access to Documents

37. Rules and practices guaranteeing journalist's independence and safety, including as regards protection of journalistic sources and communications, referring also to follow-up given the alerts lodged with the Council of Europe's Platform to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists.

Reference should be made to the response to Section 34 of the contribution.

38. Law enforcement capacity, including during protests and demonstrations, to ensure journalists' safety and to investigate attacks on journalists.

Media Relations remains a key component of the continuous professional development for all MPF officers.

In 2025, the Malta Police Force participated in an OSCE Meeting for National Focal Points on the 'Safety of Journalists' Project organised by the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) in Thessaloniki, Greece (12-13 March 2025). This project was launched in May 2022 and running until December 2027, implements the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/18.

During 2025, the Malta Police Force also joined a consortium for an EU co-funded OSPREY project on 'Online Safety and Security for Protection of Public-Facing Professionals and Democratic Resilience'. The project commenced in December 2025 and will end in December 2028. The lead coordinator is CENTRIC from the Sheffield Hallam University.

Information on the Threat to Life (TTL) Assessment Registry for 2025 by the MPF:

Type	Quantity
Full TTL Assessment	26
Preliminary Checks Only	31
Total Assessments	57

Sub-Categories	Quantity
Journalists	8

Activists and/or Concerned Citizens	4
Judiciary Members	6
Members of Parliament	2
Disciplined Forces / Authority	3
Private Citizens	34
Total Assessments	57

Furthermore, the MPF has enhanced its service delivery through the Remote Reporting Unit, accessible via the MPF's official [website](#). This service enables members of the public to file non-emergency police reports remotely, from the safety of their own home or workplace, using familiar communication platforms, eliminating the need to attend a police station in person. The process allows a person to submit a simple booking form, after which a trained police officer contacts them at a scheduled time through their preferred method, including video or voice call, in order to take the report in a structured manner and, where relevant, view evidence or damage through live video.

The Remote Reporting Unit has been used by a broad cross-section of the public, including individuals who may be vulnerable, mobility-limited, time-constrained, or otherwise hesitant to attend a police station. It has also proven to be a practical and discreet channel for journalists who may require a secure way to report incidents linked to threats, harassment, or other offences, from their own homes and offices, and without exposing themselves to avoidable risk. The service strengthens accessibility and user confidence by ensuring that the reporting individual is supported by a single designated officer during the call, limiting unnecessary repetition and enhancing privacy.

Upon completion of the report, the individual is provided with an official Police Report Number and a digital copy of the filed report sent immediately by email. The system then routes the report to the appropriate district or specialised unit for any additional investigations required, and clear information is provided to the reporting party on the section responsible for follow-up and case ownership. In this way, remote reporting complements in-person reporting, reduces service barriers, and supports a consistent rule-of-law response for all persons seeking police assistance.

Below are statistics related to press releases issued by the Communications Office and on-site media briefings which are held for cases that generate public interest (such as fatal/serious accidents and homicides):

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
On-site press briefings	80	88	92	95	145
Press Releases	877	862	786	714	668

39. Access to information and public documents, by public at large and journalists (including transparency authorities where they exist, procedures, costs/fees, timelines, administrative / judicial review of decisions, execution of decisions by public authorities, possible obstacles related to the classification of information).

The Freedom of Information (FoI) Digital System – an online portal facilitating direct communication between system administrators, the FoI management team, and applicants – was launched in August 2025. The platform enables users to submit and track FoI requests seamlessly, ensuring greater transparency and efficiency in the process. The portal is accessible via the following [link](#).

40. **Lawsuits (including SLAPP – strategic lawsuits against public participation) and convictions against journalists (including defamation) and measures taken to safeguard against manifestly unfounded and abusive lawsuits.**

The Media and Defamation Act (Chapter 579 of the Laws of Malta) already provides for safeguards against the institution of manifestly unfounded and abusive lawsuits in domestic cases.

In addition, Malta transposed Directive (EU) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings by virtue of the [Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation Order \(Subsidiary Legislation 460.40 of the Laws of Malta\)](#).

Other

Lovin Malta Limited (C75368) et vs L-Avukat tal-Istat:

The case is nearing its conclusion, as the third-party intervenor, *One Productions Ltd*, is expected to conclude its evidence at the next hearing of 23 March 2026 after cross-examining one of the plaintiffs. This will finalise the evidence-gathering phase and transition the lawsuit into the submissions and observations stage, before it is ultimately adjourned for judgment. It is important to note that there are four stakeholders directly involved in this lawsuit: the plaintiff, the defendant, and two intervenors, namely the two main political parties media houses *One Productions Ltd* and *Media.Link Communications*.

IV. Other Institutional Issues Related to Checks and Balances

A. The Process for Preparing, Enacting and Implementing Laws

41. Framework, policy and use of impact assessments and evidence-based policymaking, stakeholders'/public consultations (including rules and practices on the transparent participation of civil society to policy development and decision-making process), and transparency and quality of the legislative process in the preparatory, the parliamentary and implementation phase (including guidance on how to implement legislation).

Reference should be made to the reply to Recommendation 7.

42. Rules and use of fast-track procedures and emergency procedures (for example, the percentage of decisions adopted through emergency/urgent procedure compared to the total number of adopted decisions).

There are no new developments to report.

43. Safeguards to ensure legal certainty, the stability of the legal framework and non-discrimination.

There are no new developments to report.

44. Rules and application of states of emergency (or analogous regimes), including judicial review and parliamentary oversight.

There are no new developments to report.

45. Regime for constitutional review of laws.

There are no new developments to report. However, the Office of the Law Commissioner has been further strengthened with additional resources, as detailed in the table below:

Year	Allocated Budget	Actual Expenditure
2020	€55,000	€107,892
2021	€150,000	€184,267
2022	€150,000	€253,369
2023	€200,000	€ 240,131.70
2024	€260,000	€346,002.79
2025	€350,000	€438,487.65

B. Independent Authorities

46. Independence, resources, capacity and powers (including effective access to relevant data) of national human rights institutions (NHRIs), of ombudsman institutions if different from NHRIs, of equality bodies if different from NHRIs and of supreme audit institutions.

In line with the Government's commitment and strategy to increase the capacity, authority and public accountability of national institutions, substantial increases have been made to the resources allocated to the national equality body. Specifically, in 2025, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) was allocated a recurrent budget of €900,000, with an additional €50,000 for capital expenses.

In addition, in June 2025, the NCPE successfully completed the EU co-funded project "Strengthening Knowledge on Integration and Non-Discrimination" (SKIN). The total expenditure for this project was €215,747, with 90% funded by the European Union and 10% by Malta, spanning a duration of 32 months.

47. Statistics / reports concerning the follow-up to recommendations by National Human Rights Institutions, ombudsman institutions, equality bodies and supreme audit institutions in the past year.

Follow up of Ombudsman Recommendations

On 5 December 2025, the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary issued the [Governance Action on the Parliamentary Ombudsman's Annual Report 2024](#), wherein Government announced that 78% of cases received by the Ombudsman during 2024 have been closed after their resolution.

Follow up of National Audit Office Recommendations

On 25 September 2025, the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary issued the [Governance Action on the NAO's Annual Report on Public Accounts 2023 and other NAO Reports 2024](#), wherein Government announced that 86% of the recommendations made by the NAO were implemented.

48. Safeguards to ensure the effective independence of supervisory and regulatory authorities with a direct impact on economic operators such as national economic oversight, enforcement and competition authorities.

There are no new developments to report.

C. Accessibility and Judicial Review of Administrative Decisions

49. Transparency of administrative decisions and sanctions (including their publication and rules on collection of related data) and respect of the good administration principle (including the obligation of the administration to give reasons for decisions) .

There are no new developments to report.

50. Judicial review of administrative decisions: short description of the general regime (in particular competent court, scope, suspensive effect, interim measures, and any applicable specific rules or derogations from the general regime of.

There are no new developments to report.

51. Safeguards (other than judicial review) regarding decisions or inaction of administrative authorities, including remedies (ex. Administrative review).

There are no new developments to report.

52. Rules and practices related to the application by all courts, including constitutional jurisdictions, of the preliminary ruling procedure (Art 267 TFEU).

There are no new developments to report.

53. Implementation of final judgements by the public administration and State institutions and follow-up given to supranational judgements, including decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, as well as available remedies in case of non-implementation.

There are no new developments to report.

54. Oversight, including by courts, of the use of intrusive surveillance software by national authorities.

The Security Service Act of Malta (Chapter 391 of the Laws of Malta) allows for the interception of communications and interference with property if authorised by a warrant. Warrants for surveillance and interception are issued by the Minister responsible for the Security Service and require no prior judicial authorisation.

The Act prohibits the interception of communications unless authorized by a warrant, and it outlines safeguards to limit the extent of information disclosure and copying. These measures aim to ensure that surveillance activities are conducted within legal boundaries, adhering to principles of legality, proportionality, and necessity.

Oversight is also provided by a Commissioner who reviews the Minister's use of these powers and investigates complaints. As per Article 12 of the Act, the Commissioner is "a person who holds or has held the office of judge of the superior courts or who has held the office of Attorney General". The Commissioner "shall keep under review the exercise by the Minister of his powers" under the Act. In the discharge of his functions under the Act, the Commissioner "shall act in his individual judgment and shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority and shall not be liable to be questioned by any court".

It is to be pointed out that the role of the Commissioner responsible for the Security Service is also to visit and make all necessary checks to verify that warrants are being issued according to law. He sees that the procedure is thoroughly followed. Such an exercise has been conducted on several occasions and the Commissioner responsible was always satisfied that the Malta Security Service followed the whole procedure and that all necessary internal checks and balances were in place so as to ascertain that no person had been intercepted without the required procedure.

55. Respect of the good administration principle (including the obligation of the administration to give reasons for decisions).

There are no new developments to report.

D. The Enabling Framework for Civil Society

56. Measures regarding the framework for civil society organisations and human rights defenders (e.g. legal framework and its application in practice including, registration, transparency and dissolution rules).

The Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organizations (OCVO) continued its effective and comprehensive dialogue with the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS), which is the official recognised representative body of the voluntary sector and voluntary organisations (VO). The VO Plus Convention, under the President of Malta's patronage, has continued to support national consultations with stakeholders and regulators. The Commissioner led the reform process in consultation with the sector which has now been concluded. Legislative amendments are in the pipeline to boost legal recognition of the sector, an important pillar in the context of the social, economic and democratic development of the country.

The legislative amendments have been drafted and are in the final stages before the issuance of final formal public consultation. The legislative changes highlight the importance of the sector for the economic, social and democratic function of the country. The primary aim is to reduce the bureaucratic element, so that the organisations can focus on their efforts and activity. The OCVO is also contributing for the facilitation of ongoing dialogue with civil society organisations and human rights defenders.

57. Rules and practices having an impact on the effective operation and safety of civil society organisations and human rights defenders. This includes to protect them from attacks - verbal, physical or on-line, intimidation, legal threats incl. SLAPPs, negative narratives or smear campaigns, measures capable of affecting the public perception of civil society organisations, etc. It also includes measures to monitor threats or attacks and dedicated support services, as well as remedies.

There are no new developments to report.

58. Organisation of financial support for civil society organisations and human rights defenders (e.g. framework to ensure access to funding, and for financial viability, taxation/incentive/donation systems, measures to ensure a fair distribution of funding).

There are no new developments to report.

E. Initiatives to Foster a Rule of Law Culture

Other – please specify

In addition, on 6 June 2025, the President of Malta held the year **'State of the Nation'** conference, based on the fifth National Survey that gathers scientific data on the evolving aspirations, concerns, and character of Malta's population, while fostering an informative debate that can guide legislative proposals.

F. Single Market Dimension

If you are aware of any rule of law related challenges, including issues with market access and the conditions for economic activities, faced by businesses or citizens from your Member States in a cross-border context (e.g. through complaints received), please highlight them here:

There are no known issues to report.