Rule of law in Malta: Parliament calls for justice and reforms

- Bring to justice all those implicated in cases brought to light by Daphne Caruana Galizia
- Serious threats against EU values, though some progress being made
- Step up fight against fraud and corruption

The latest revelations about the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia are of great concern, in particular the possible involvement of ministers and political appointees.

In a resolution adopted on Thursday with 635 votes for, 46 against and 12 abstentions, the European Parliament takes stock of developments in the case of Daphne Caruana Galizia and other related investigations, following the testimony of convicted criminal Vincent Muscat. Expressing deep concern about the possible involvement of ministers and political appointees in the murder case, MEPs urge the government to bring to justice all those implicated in all cases brought to light by the journalist.

MEPs acknowledge the progress made in the murder investigation and other, related cases of corruption and money laundering, “albeit greatly delayed”, and call for the search to go beyond the previous prime minister’s chief of staff, including on possible attempts by public officials to conceal evidence and obstruct investigations and judicial proceedings. All allegations of corruption and fraud should be investigated and prosecuted “with the appropriate rigour and at the appropriate level”, they underline.

There are serious and persistent threats to EU values in the country, including media freedom, judicial and police independence, and the freedom of assembly, though MEPs note that the Government of Malta has made some progress in relation to the rule of law and judicial independence. The launch of the structural reform project is welcome, they say, given the ‘deep corruption patterns’ identified by the Commission in its 2020 Rule of Law Report. MEPs acknowledge the steps taken by the Maltese authorities to protect independent journalism, stressing that further improvements are needed, and calling on the Maltese authorities to implement the EU whistle-blower directive.
Parliament is deeply concerned about the harmful impact of citizenship and residence schemes on the integrity of EU citizenship, and reiterates its call on the Maltese government to assure transparency and terminate its schemes. It is also asking the Commission to propose anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) legislation to protect independent European media from vexatious lawsuits intended to silence or intimidate them - a step that MEPs have been calling for since 2018.

Background

Maltese anti-corruption investigative journalist and blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia was murdered on 16 October 2017. She reported on government corruption, allegations of money laundering, and organised crime. Parliament launched the Daphne Caruana Galizia Prize for Journalism in October 2020, on the third anniversary of her death, for “outstanding journalism reflecting EU values”. Read more here.

Further information
The adopted text will be available here (29.04.2021)

Procedure file
Catch up with the recent debate on the same subject (25.03.2021)
EP launches Caruana Galizia Prize for Journalism on anniversary of her murder (15.10.2020)
Malta: investigation risks being compromised while Prime Minister is in office (18.12.2019)
Malta and Slovakia: MEPs warn of lack of judicial independence and corruption (28.03.2019)
Legislative train - media freedom and pluralism
EP Research Service - Protecting EU common values within the Member States: An overview of monitoring, prevention and enforcement mechanisms at EU level (25.09.2020)
Free photos, video and audio material (press freedom in Malta)
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