

Andrew Caruana Galizia: "We need to work together to make sure that European values are upheld";



The son of the Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia who was killed in 2017 while reporting on government corruption addressed the December plenary session of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and said that a European rule of law monitoring mechanism could help defend journalism against all forms of pressure.

The murder of a journalist represents an attack on society and Europe's fundamental values. For this reason, the EU needs structures to fight transnational crime and mechanisms to protect journalists and media freedom.

Andrew Caruana Galizia, son of **Daphne Caruana Galizia**, the Maltese journalist who was assassinated on 16 October 2017 after investigating and exposing cases of corruption at the highest levels of government, was a special guest at the EESC December plenary session and pointed out the need for new instruments at European level to monitor the rule of law across Europe.

"The European Parliament is working to introduce a rule of law monitoring mechanism and the new Commission seems amenable to it. We need to really work

together to make sure that it has teeth and is fit for purpose and that the values that make up the European Union are just as enforceable as the values that underpin our single market," he said.

"Many of the crimes my mother uncovered were European crimes, crimes that involved several jurisdictions. It is impossible for one single police to deliver justice for many of these crimes. EU membership allowed the free flow of money and political support at European level, without the free flow of justice and police investigation," he continued.

The EESC president, **Luca Jahier**, stressed how vital free journalism was for the correct and balanced functioning of our society: "Media freedom is at the core of the values we hold dear. If journalists are silenced, so is democracy. The revelations of the past few weeks have confirmed what Daphne had long warned about before her murder: that the rule of law in the European Union's smallest Member State had been compromised by those very same people whose duty it was to protect the citizens of Malta. Since then, other journalists have died while working on investigative stories. All stood up for democracy and the rule of law. All died because nothing could silence them."

The assembly paid tribute to Daphne's invaluable work, unanimously reaffirming the importance of a free press and highlighting the essential role played by journalists in defending our fundamental freedoms every day, which, together with democracy and the rule of law, contributes to peace and stability in Europe.

Mentioning the current daily demonstrations of the Maltese people, **Stefano Mallia**, EESC member from Malta, said: "This is the first time, in the history of our country, that thousands of people are protesting without being led by a political party. This is unprecedented in a country where political parties are very present in our everyday life. It's a moment in history where civil society finally found its voice. Daphne would be proud of this. We are seeking the cleaning of our political system, to defend our democracy and to obtain justice for Daphne, her family and the nation she fought so hard for."

Mr Caruana Galizia, referring to the latest developments in the investigations of his mother's murder, was sharp in his words and said that there would never be hope of justice without institutional change in the country and that a change in political culture in Malta was also needed: "We are now closer than we've ever been in our national history to a consensus around what needs to change in the country, what institutional and constitutional changes we need, as well as changes to political culture, parties and media culture."

Mr Jahier concluded by praising the extraordinary mobilisation of the Maltese civil society: "All those responsible for the murder of Daphne must be held to account as soon as possible. European citizens cannot tolerate any further delays. I am really proud of the Maltese civil society organisations, which have called for justice as no one should be above the law. I wish to express to them our strong solidarity and support in this crucial passage for the future of their country, for the promotion of the fundamental values of our

Europe. We are with you!”.