

## Press release – Malta: MEPs conclude fact-finding visit to assess Caruana Galizia murder inquiry



The delegation of MEPs, led by [Sophie in 't Veld \(Renew Europe, NL\)](#), met the Maltese prime minister Joseph Muscat and other government members, the police, judicial authorities, the opposition, representatives of civil society and journalists, as well as members of the family of Daphne Caruana Galizia, amongst others. This is the third time an EP delegation has visited Malta to inquire into the murder of Ms Caruana Galizia and the state of the rule of law.

MEPs remain unconvinced that Prime Minister Muscat has acted judiciously in the last few weeks, including in his decision to remain in office until mid-January. Throughout their meetings, especially with the Prime Minister, they stressed that the negative perceptions of the government's actions, as well as the falling trust and credibility, were not being addressed. They underlined that it is of paramount importance that the investigations continue without undue interference and that justice is served. In this regard, the delegation stressed that the next 40 days will be crucial, also for trust in the integrity of the investigation. MEPs remain concerned that, with Prime Minister Muscat in place, that integrity is at risk.

Following a meeting with high-ranking police officials and investigators, MEPs acknowledged the progress in investigating the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia, while recognising that the case is far from being closed. They also expressed their worry that the investigations into related money laundering and corruption cases have not advanced, especially with regard to Keith Schembri, the former Chief of Staff of Prime Minister Muscat, and Konrad Mizzi, the former Tourism Minister. The delegation reiterated that Europol needs to be closely involved in all aspects of the investigation.

Finally, MEPs noted that a reform process is underway addressing amongst other things, the controversial constitutional role of the Attorney General and the current system of judicial appointments. However, they underlined that persistent threats to the rule of law in Malta cannot be precluded. In this regard, MEPs welcomed Commission Vice-President Jourová's comments, stating that Malta's failure to enact judicial reforms could serve as a basis for triggering an Article 7 procedure. They called on the European Commission to start a dialogue with Malta in the rule of law framework immediately.

Speaking at the end of the delegation's visit, Ms in 't Veld said:

"We came to Malta with deep concerns, and we leave not reassured. The rule of law under pressure, impunity for crimes, widespread corruption, journalists intimidated and harassed, the right of assembly thwarted and politics descended into toxic bipartisanship. Malta is a part of Europe; what affects Malta, affects Europe. Europe must monitor this situation closely, and press for far-reaching constitutional reforms. We stand by the people of Malta, who deserve clean government and officials with integrity."

The delegation comprised of the following MEPs:

A press conference took place at the end of the mission, available [here](#). The video will also be available later in [EbS+](#), together with other audiovisual material from the mission.

## **Background**

Following visits to [Malta](#) and [Slovakia](#) in the aftermath of the murders of the Maltese blogger and journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, and the Slovak journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, Martina Kušnírová, the Civil Liberties Committee [set up its Rule of Law Monitoring Group in June 2018](#). Having looked into concerns about the progress of the investigations, as well as allegations of harassment, intimidation, corruption and fraud, the final report identified [serious shortcomings in the rule of law](#).

In the 9th parliamentary term, [the Democracy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights Monitoring Group](#) will monitor and report on relevant issues across all member states until 31 December 2021. Newly arising issues can be added to the DRFMG scope if Members representing a committee majority agree.

The Monitoring Group continues to review the situation in Malta. In its latest meeting on 28 November, the DRFMG discussed the latest developments in Malta and received an update from Europol regarding the support given by the EU Agency. It reiterates its resolution from March this year, in particular the need for full clarity and for justice to be done in the Daphne Caruana Galizia murder case.