

A REPUBLIC THAT **WORKS**



A 5-Year Programme for **Democratic Renewal**

2026-2031

A memorandum
addressed to all
political parties
contesting the 2026
general election

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A CIVIL SOCIETY MOVEMENT

A message to readers

Vicki Ann Cremona
President, Repubblika

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Malta will soon enter a new electoral cycle in a fragile democratic moment. Despite the upbeat and well-deserved commemoration, in 2024, of Malta's sixty years of sovereign statehood, fifty years as a republic, and twenty years as a member of the European Union, public trust in institutions is low, governance failures remain unresolved, and political polarisation subverts the sense of shared citizenship that is necessary to maintain the health of a democratic, constitutional republic. The consequences of allowing democratic standards to slide are easily recognised in selective observance of the Constitution, diminished respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, environmental distress, social dislocation and avoidable personal tragedies.

Yet *Repubblika* remains convinced that Malta has the talent, civic energy and constitutional framework required to establish a fair democracy, honest governance and a resilient republic. That outcome requires intentional reform—not false optimism, deception or shallow slogans. It is this dual conviction that inspires our activities and is embodied in this memorandum, which is addressed alike to Malta's political parties, the candidates standing for election, civil society activists, and all voters who yearn for a healthy democracy and good governance.

Every person living in these islands, whether a citizen or not, deserves to live in a country which consistently protects the primacy of human dignity, preserves the

integrity of the commons (all the finite resources which sustain life) and promotes social well-being. Yet none of this is possible when the State fails in its first duty, namely, to uphold the rule of law, which is the precondition for every other good mentioned here. Today's failures blight the prospects of future generations: our children, grandchildren and those yet unborn.

With this in mind, we offer the proposals in this memorandum. It distils the proposals and campaigns undertaken by *Repubblika* and, indeed, all civil society; it resonates with many of the promises made by political parties during the electoral campaigns of the past quarter-century. The proposals are designed to ensure that State power is always exercised for the public good, that institutions serve the country rather than the Executive, and that every person in Malta is protected by the law, not by proximity to power. The reforms that we propose, and that thousands of people wish to see implemented, are not partisan and do not favour any party. They are a structural programme for sustaining a vibrant constitutional democracy in a modern State; any government that seeks to promote the public good could implement them.

As you read the proposals, campaign for election, or prepare to vote, bear in mind the future of your children and their children, and before you dismiss any proposal as unrealistic or too ambitious, think what its absence could mean for them.

REPUBLIC DAY

13 DECEMBER 2025

How to read and implement this programme

This memorandum is not a take-it-or-leave-it blueprint. It is a modular programme comprising concrete reforms that can be adopted as a whole or in phases, depending on political will and legislative priorities. Each proposal is written so that it can stand on its own. Still, the reforms are mutually reinforcing: the more of them are implemented together, the stronger Malta's democratic safeguards will become.

Repubblika recognises that any incoming government must manage limited financial and administrative resources. Many of the reforms proposed here require political will and legal change more than enormous new spending. Where measures have a budgetary impact, they can be sequenced over the five-year parliamentary term,

piloted before being scaled up, or financed in part through savings from reduced corruption, improved procurement and more efficient institutions.

We are prepared to work with any political party, before and after the election, to sequence, cost and prioritise these reforms in a way that is fiscally responsible while still delivering authentic democratic renewal within one legislature.

What follows is a structured programme of reforms, organised into six pillars covering power, enforcement, accountability, community participation, human rights and the protection of the commons.

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PILLAR A

Who Holds Power

A democratic State must distribute power rather than concentrate it. When too much authority resides in the Executive, oversight collapses, institutions become dependent, and citizens lose protection. The reforms in this pillar ensure that no office — not even the Prime Minister — can dominate Parliament, regulators, appointments, public broadcasting or enforcement bodies. Checks and balances are not a luxury; they are the operating system of a Republic.

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O I

A constitutional reform process that belongs to the people, not political leaders

Constitutional change must be transparent, participatory and institutionalised — not negotiated informally between party leaders.

A standing Constitutional Reform Act should: (a) create a permanent parliamentary committee on constitutional affairs; (b) mandate an independent expert panel to advise; (c) require structured public consultation; (d) publish draft amendments for feedback; and (e) publish the full legislative history of reforms. Constitutional change should not depend on personal negotiations but on a guaranteed democratic process.

02

Institutions that remain independent regardless of who is in power

The independence of institutions must not depend on the goodwill of any government.

The Constitution should require open, merit-based appointments for the President, the judiciary, police leadership, financial intelligence chiefs, and heads of independent authorities. Appointment must involve: (a) public call; (b) published shortlist; (c) published evaluation report; and (d) approval by an enhanced parliamentary majority or, failing that, an appointment by an independent commission. Removal should be limited to defined causes with judicial review.

03

Government decision-making that is transparent and protected from private influence

Citizens should be able to see who is seeking to influence public decisions and how they are doing so.

A Lobbying and Influence Register Act should require disclosure — within 10 days — of all meetings between office-holders and businesses, intermediaries or lobbyists. Lobbying outside the register should be unlawful. Former ministers, permanent secretaries and regulators should face a three-year cooling-off period before joining sectors they oversaw. Public procurement above a threshold should include disclosure of intermediaries.

04

A Parliament capable of scrutinising government without financial dependence on it

MPs must be financially and structurally independent of ministers to perform oversight.

Parliament should be a full-time role, with a strict ban on any paid work with public entities or regulated industries. Annual independently audited asset and interest declarations should be mandatory. Parliamentary committees must have the power to summon witnesses, demand documents, and enforce compliance through the courts if necessary.

05

A public administration protected from clientelism and political patronage

**Public roles must be based on
competence, not political loyalty.**

Legislation should limit “positions of trust” to a closed statutory list of advisory posts. All appointments should require: (a) a public call; (b) published criteria; (c) published remuneration; and (d) a conflict-of-interest declaration. The total number of political appointees per ministry should be capped in law and disclosed annually. Dual roles (e.g., advisory + regulatory) should be prohibited.

06

Public contracts that are transparent from tender to final payment

Public money must be traceable at every step.

Procurement law should require publication of: (a) tender documents at launch; (b) a list of all bidders; (c) opening minutes; (d) evaluation report within 30 days of award; (e) the final contract; (f) all variation orders and payments in real time. This reform is systemic and applies to all procurements, regardless of size or risk. Data should be machine-readable and reusable.



Ethics in public life enforced by independent oversight, not self-regulation

Ministers and politicians must not be judged by their colleagues.

An Independent Commission on Ethics in Public Life should investigate misconduct by ministers, parliamentary secretaries and senior officials. Its board should combine multi-party parliamentary appointees and non-political members (including a retired judge). It should have powers to obtain testimony and documents and publish findings when recommendations are ignored.

The Commissioner for Standards in Public Life should have powers to verify and enforce asset and interest declarations of ministers, parliamentary secretaries, senior political appointees and their spouses. Investigations and compliance hearings should be conducted publicly, decisions should be binding, and non-compliance should trigger administrative fines and, when appropriate, referral for criminal prosecution.



Civil society is recognised and protected as a democratic actor

NGOs should be free to criticise the government without retaliation.

The Constitution should prohibit administrative or financial retaliation against NGOs for criticising public authorities, and guarantee civil-society organisations' freedom to operate independently of government influence. Constitutional protection should ensure that NGOs are free to participate in national public consultations, engage in public debate and seek judicial review on matters of democratic accountability, irrespective of the government of the day. Advocacy is a protected democratic function, not a privilege granted at the State's discretion. This constitutional protection is separate from operational regulation of NGOs, which must never be used to influence or constrain advocacy.



Democratic protection against abuse of surveillance and AI

Technology must not be turned into
an instrument of political control.

Use of surveillance and AI systems by the government should be lawful only when:
(a) authorised by judicial warrant; (b) strictly necessary and proportionate;
(c) subject to independent oversight; and (d) automatically deleted if
unlawfully obtained. This proposal protects citizens and democracy from
unlawful State surveillance. The law should criminalise the use of surveillance
against journalists, human-rights defenders and political opponents.

IO

Annual Rule-of-Law Scorecard

Democracy must be measurable — not rhetorical.

A Rule-of-Law Scorecard Act should require an annual independent assessment of institutional performance in areas including judicial independence, anti-corruption enforcement, transparency, equality before the law, press freedom and civic space. The Scorecard should set quantifiable benchmarks, publish comparative metrics, identify areas of non-performance and trigger mandatory parliamentary hearings. Reform should not depend on scandal — institutional health must be monitored continuously.

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II

Legislative Impact Statements for Constitutional Principles

Every law must strengthen — not erode
— the Republic's constitutional foundations.

Bills that affect democratic governance, oversight, rights, or institutional independence should require Legislative Impact Statements that assess their compatibility with constitutional principles, the separation of powers, institutional impartiality, and equality before the law. Statements must be published before the parliamentary debate and include expert input. This embeds constitutional culture into everyday law-making rather than episodic constitutional reform.

I2

Sunset Clauses for Extraordinary Executive Powers

**Emergency powers must expire
automatically — not become normalised.**

Any law or regulation granting extraordinary executive power — including national security, public order, or emergency governance powers — should include fixed sunset clauses and periodic parliamentary renewal requirements. Renewal should require objective justification, super-majority approval and publication of an impact review. No exceptional power should outlive the crisis that justified it.



PILLAR B

Who Polices Power

A democracy survives only when abuse of power is detected, investigated and punished. If law enforcement, financial intelligence and prosecution depend on political discretion, impunity becomes a structural feature. The reforms in this pillar ensure that no one — regardless of office, wealth or influence — is beyond the reach of the law, and that corruption and organised crime are treated as threats to society, not as political complications.

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I3

A single, independent Anti-Corruption

Authority with the power to prosecute.

Corruption cannot be defeated by bodies that depend on the people they may need to investigate.

A new Anti-Corruption Authority should be created with the power to: (a) investigate proactively; (b) compel testimony and documents; (c) access financial-intelligence data directly; and (d) prosecute criminal cases without ministerial or Attorney-General approval. Appointment of its leadership should require multi-party parliamentary support and fixed, non-renewable terms.

The Authority should be prohibited from initiating criminal or administrative proceedings based on political activity or dissent, and should be required to publish prosecutorial criteria and annual case-selection statistics. Decisions to open or decline cases should be subject to judicial review. Selective or politically motivated prosecution shall constitute abuse of office.

14

Full-time inquiring magistrates dedicated to corruption and organised crime

Complex corruption cases require uninterrupted focus and specialised teams.

A corps of full-time inquiring magistrates should be established to handle corruption and organised crime exclusively, supported by judicial police teams including forensic accountants, cyber-investigators, and financial crime analysts. These magistrates must have priority access to Europol, Eurojust and international mutual-assistance channels.

15

Public right to trigger criminal inquiries into corruption

When serious wrongdoing is alleged, investigations must not depend on political discretion or personal permission.

The law should restore and strengthen the right of any citizen to request a magisterial inquiry into alleged crimes, including corruption and abuse of office. In cases of corruption or financial crime against the State, civil society organisations dedicated to anti-corruption should be entitled to make such requests without the need to demonstrate individual legal standing. Judicial authorities must decide on requests through published, reasoned decrees within fixed deadlines. Accountability must not depend on political will.

Civil-society organisations whose mission is to prevent or expose corruption should be entitled to intervene *parte civile* in criminal prosecutions for corruption and financial crime, and to represent the public interest in civil actions for restitution arising from corruption. They should not be required to prove individual material damage, as the protected interest is collective: the integrity of the Republic.

16

A prosecution structure capable of matching the sophistication of financial crime

Prosecutors must not be structurally outmatched by the crimes they pursue.

The Prosecution Service should include a Specialised Corruption & Organised-Crime Division, with open recruitment, competitive remuneration and secure tenure for senior prosecutors. The division should have standing panels of industry experts and financial specialists and set multiyear prosecution priorities based on risk.

17

Police leadership protected by independent oversight — not the appearance of independence

Police independence must work in
practice, not only on paper.

The appointment of the Police Commissioner should require cross-party confirmation by a qualified parliamentary majority so that no government can unilaterally select leadership. A Police Oversight Board, composed of cross-party parliamentary representatives and independent civic members, should monitor the performance of police leadership against published policing priorities and trigger public hearings where risks of political influence or underperformance arise. Removal of a Commissioner should require a supermajority decision of the Oversight Board, based on defined grounds, with judicial review. In parallel, the Corps should introduce professional training in constitutional ethics, human rights standards, and non-partisan policing, and career progression should be tied to integrity and professional competence rather than political networks. Parliament should hold regular oversight hearings on policing twice a year, and the Police Oversight Board should publish an annual assessment of police independence and performance. The purpose is not cosmetic reform, but a policing culture in which the Commissioner serves the law and the public—not the Executive.

18

Financial-intelligence leadership is structurally insulated from political control

Those who detect high-level crime must not depend on those who may be implicated in it.

Leadership of the FIAU and similar bodies should require multi-party parliamentary approval and removal only through an open procedure. Budgets should be protected by law and not negotiated with a ministry. Reporting lines should be to Parliament — not to the Executive.

19

Intelligence services structurally insulated from political control

Security and intelligence agencies
must protect national security — not
the government of the day.

Leadership of intelligence agencies should require multi-party parliamentary confirmation and fixed non-renewable terms. Operational authorisations involving the surveillance of journalists, politicians, civil society actors, or candidates must require judicial warrants and ex post review by an independent oversight committee with security clearance. Intelligence budgets should be approved and audited by Parliament, not ministers, and the agencies should report annually to a cross-party oversight committee.

20

An Anti-Mafia legal framework that targets criminal networks, not just individuals

Organised crime must be prosecuted as a system rather than disconnected acts.

Legislation should criminalise participation in a criminal organisation, including leadership, facilitation and professional services. Confiscation should apply to unexplained wealth, allowing courts to seize assets disproportionate to declared lawful income unless the origin is justified. Professional intermediaries should be subject to mandatory red-flag reporting and liability for enabling criminal networks.

21

Integrity Pacts for high-value public contracts

Corruption is best prevented before
money changes hands.

Public contracts above a defined threshold should require Integrity Pacts, placing independent civil society monitors from tender design to project completion, with access to procurement documents, variation orders, and payment records. If irregularities emerge, monitors must have the authority to automatically escalate concerns to enforcement authorities, ensuring that major contracts are monitored before risks materialise.

22

A national anti-corruption strategy with measurable delivery

Integrity requires long-term planning and accountability — not reaction to scandal.

Parliament should require a 5-year National Anti-Corruption Strategy with measurable goals, deadlines, budget commitments and reporting obligations from every relevant authority. A parliamentary committee should conduct annual implementation reviews, and outstanding Venice Commission, GRECO and FATF recommendations should be mandatory deliverables.

23

Criminalisation of State Capture

When private interests control public institutions, democracy ceases to exist.

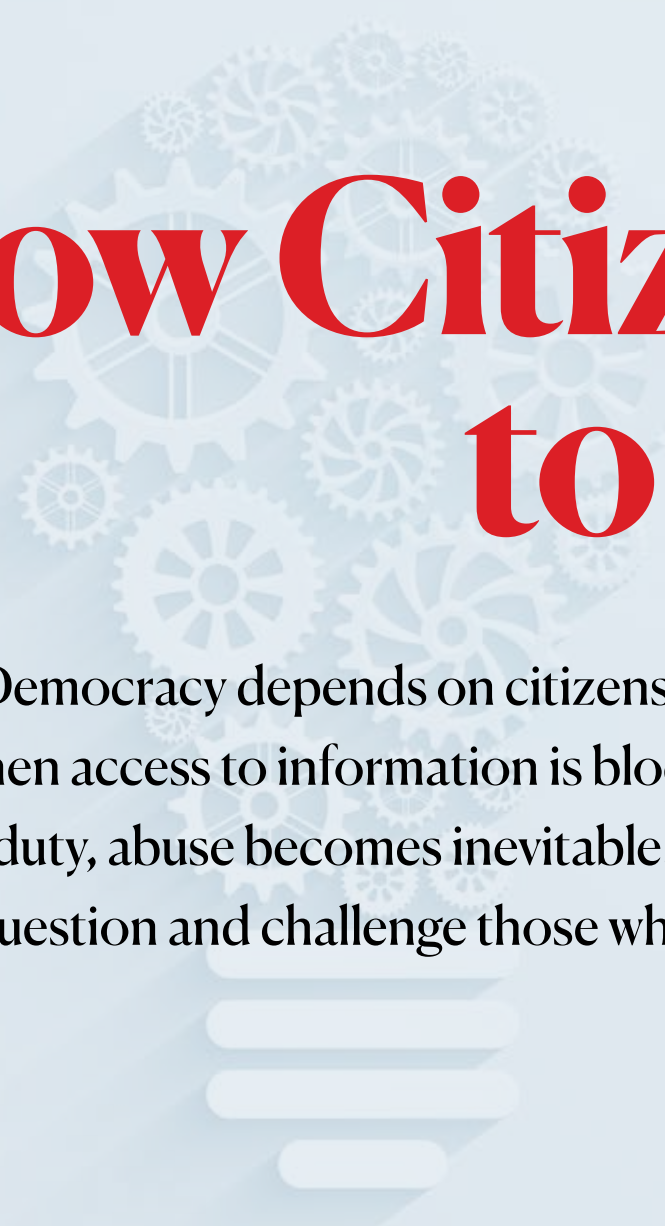
The Criminal Code should include a standalone offence of State Capture — the intentional subversion of democratic institutions, regulatory bodies, procurement systems or law-enforcement functions for private or partisan gain. Liability should apply to public officials and private actors, including financial and professional enablers. Penalties should include confiscation of illicit benefits and disqualification from public office or regulated industries.

24

Corruption-Risk Impact Assessments for Major Infrastructure

Corruption must be prevented before
it becomes irreversible.

Public infrastructure projects above a defined threshold should require Corruption-Risk Impact Assessments before contracting begins, identifying red-flag risks related to governance structure, ownership opacity, procurement design, subcontracting chains and political exposure. Risk-mitigation plans should be mandatory and monitored throughout the project cycle, with publication and escalation rights to law enforcement when concerns arise.



PILLAR C

How Citizens Hold Power to Account

Democracy depends on citizens' ability to scrutinise power. When journalism is intimidated, when access to information is blocked, and when transparency is treated as a threat rather than a duty, abuse becomes inevitable. The reforms in this pillar ensure that the public can observe, question and challenge those who govern, and that truth-telling is protected — not punished.

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25

Journalism is recognised and protected as a democratic function

Journalists must be able to expose
wrongdoing without fear or obstruction.

The Constitution should recognise journalism as a democratic safeguard and prohibit discrimination against journalists based on critical reporting. Courts should apply heightened protection standards when restrictions on journalistic work are proposed. Public authorities should be legally barred from withholding information or access on the grounds of editorial discomfort.

26

An independent protection mechanism for journalists at risk

The State must protect journalists — not monitor them.

The Media Security Committee should be abolished and replaced by an independent Journalist Protection Office empowered to provide rapid protective measures in response to threats. It should coordinate with law enforcement on safety, not intelligence, and must not store data revealing journalistic sources or investigations.

27

Anti-SLAPP legislation that neutralises vexatious lawsuits at the outset

Litigation should not be a tool to silence
the press or public-interest critics.

A comprehensive Anti-SLAPP Act should include: (a) early dismissal of abusive lawsuits; (b) shifting of full legal costs to the claimant; (c) punitive damages for misuse of litigation to silence public debate; and (d) prohibition on the recognition of foreign SLAPP judgments. Courts should be empowered to order disclosure of litigation funders.

28

Public broadcasting is governed independently and in the public interest

PBS must serve citizens, not the Executive.

The governance structure of PBS and the Broadcasting Authority should include: (a) open, merit-based appointment of boards through an independent nominations committee; (b) fixed non-renewable terms; (c) statutory guarantees of editorial independence; (d) multi-year funding indexed to objective criteria; and (e) annual independent audits of impartiality and pluralism.

29

Separation of political parties from newsroom control

News must not be produced under
direct political ownership.

Broadcasting licences for news and current-affairs channels should be restricted to organisations demonstrably independent of political parties. A transition period should protect media workers while ending direct party ownership of regulatory-licensed newsrooms. Pluralism requires independence, not partisan media capture.

30

Transparency and integrity in private media influence

Citizens have the right to know when news
is shaped by political or commercial power.

Media-ownership law should require disclosure of beneficial owners, affiliated companies, political actors, advertising contracts with government or state-owned enterprises, and financial dependence on regulated industries. Broadcasting and digital-platform regulators should be empowered to issue transparency notices when covert editorial influence is detected. Covert coordination between the government or state-owned enterprises and newsrooms should be prohibited.

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31

Freedom of Information as the default — not the exception

Public information belongs to the public.

FOI law should introduce: (a) a presumption of disclosure; (b) narrow exemption clauses in exhaustive lists; (c) fixed deadlines with automatic release if deadlines are ignored; (d) a tribunal with binding power to order disclosure; and (e) penalties for intentional obstruction. The burden of justification should rest with the authority withholding information.

32

Open public registers for transparency and integrity

Conflicts of interest and corruption
risks should be visible, not concealed.

Registers of beneficial ownership, public land allocation, political donations, court judgments, planning applications, public contract payments, and declarations of assets by officials should be public, searchable, and machine-readable. Paywalls, PDF opacity and case-by-case access should be prohibited.

33

A world-class whistleblower protection framework

People who expose wrongdoing must
be protected rather than punished.

Whistleblower status should be granted automatically once the criteria are met. Protections should include: (a) confidentiality; (b) protection from retaliation with reversal of burden of proof; (c) reinstatement and compensation; (d) legal support; and (e) external reporting channels independent of employers and ministries. These protections must cover public and private sectors, disciplined forces and contractors.

34

Governance of AI and data-driven systems to prevent political abuse

The State must not use technology to prepare
for, justify, or shield abuses of power.

High-risk AI and data-driven systems used by public authorities should be subject to mandatory algorithmic transparency, independent technical audits, public registers of deployed systems, and explicit bans on uses incompatible with fundamental rights, such as real-time biometric mass surveillance or social scoring. This proposal ensures transparency and accountability in the deployment of surveillance and AI systems in public administration. Algorithmic transparency and audit trails should be required for high-risk systems.

35

Public spending transparency through real-time dashboards

Citizens should not need investigative
skills to know how their money is spent.

A single Public Spending Dashboard should publish, in real time, all payments by ministries, agencies, and state-owned enterprises, linked to suppliers, contracts, variation orders, and cumulative totals. Data must be open, searchable and interoperable with procurement records. Transparency should be embedded in infrastructure, not depend on leaks.

36

Digital-Security Protections for Journalists

Press freedom must extend to the digital domain where modern attacks occur.

Legislation should prohibit hacking, doxxing, unlawful data retention, and the interception of journalists' communications, and criminalise the procurement or deployment of cybersecurity or SIGINT tools for the purpose of monitoring journalists, media workers, or their sources. Law enforcement must provide rapid protective measures when digital attacks occur, and investigators must not access source-identifying information except under a strict judicial warrant. Journalism is not free if journalists are digitally exposed.

PILLAR D

How Communities Execute Power

A healthy democracy is not governed solely from the centre. Communities must have real authority to shape their own environments, priorities and public spaces. When every decision depends on ministries and central agencies, citizens disengage, public trust collapses, and local life becomes a spectator sport rather than shared ownership. The reforms in this pillar ensure that people and communities — not only the Executive — exercise public power.

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37

Local self-government instead of ministerial dependency

Local communities should govern local life — not
serve as administrative extensions of ministries.

The Local Government Act should: (a) recognise councils as autonomous authorities; (b) define core devolved competences that ministers cannot unilaterally retract; (c) prohibit ministerial directives on purely local matters; and (d) allow councils to challenge interference through judicial review. Local decisions must be made locally, not at Castille.

38

Fair and predictable financing for local councils

Local democracy requires stable financial foundations — not politically dependent grants.

A revised financing model should guarantee: (a) statutory minimum allocations based on population, geography and social indicators; (b) multi-year funding schedules; (c) introduction of limited local revenue powers decided by local referendum; and (d) a prohibition on discretionary or partisan funding mechanisms.

Councils should also have the power, subject to local referendum approval and statutory rate caps, to introduce limited local taxes or levies to fund community priorities, ensuring local democracy includes real fiscal authority rather than dependency on central government.

39

Participatory budgeting at the municipal level

Residents should have a direct say in how
a share of their local budget is spent.

Every council should allocate at least 5% of its annual budget through participatory budgeting, allowing residents to propose, deliberate and vote on projects. The law should define minimum standards for eligibility, deliberation, public voting, publication of performance results and closure reports. This deepens civic ownership and improves accountability.

40

Citizens' Assemblies for complex or divisive policy decisions

Some reforms require collaborative thinking
rather than partisan confrontation.

Legislation should allow councils or Parliament to convene Citizens' Assemblies — representative groups selected by sortition — to evaluate issues such as land use, mobility, planning, digital rights and environmental transition. Assemblies should receive expert briefings and publish recommendations requiring a formal response within a fixed timeframe.

4I

Community oversight in planning and environmental decisions

**Residents must have an authentic voice
in shaping the environment they live in.**

Planning law should require: (a) Community Impact Assessments for major developments; (b) a statutory right for councils and recognised resident groups to demand public hearings; (c) reasoned written decisions addressing objections; and (d) mandatory publication of regulator–developer communications. This reform focuses on community-level decision-making in planning procedures. Planning exists to serve the public interest — not private access.

42

Transparency and integrity in local procurement

Decentralisation must not reproduce
clientelism on a smaller scale.

Councils should maintain a local procurement transparency portal that lists tenders, adjudication decisions, contracts, payments, and variation orders. High-value procurements should be carried out through regional procurement pools to reduce reliance on politically connected suppliers. Procurement officers must be independent public servants, not appointed by councillors.

43

Legal protection for civil society as democratic watchdogs

Citizens must be able to organise — especially
when their work criticises authorities.

The Voluntary Organisations Act and related legislation should prohibit retaliatory deregistration, disproportionate reporting burdens, exclusion from funding mechanisms, or denial of access to public spaces or facilities based on advocacy. NGOs should have guaranteed participation in public consultations and access to administrative and judicial remedies when decisions undermine democratic accountability. These are practical and operational safeguards that ensure organisations critical of government are free to function, mobilise, and participate in democratic life without fear of administrative pressure.

44

Tax recognition for community participation and civic giving

**A democracy benefits when citizens support
the common good through voluntary action.**

Donations to registered voluntary organisations — including advocacy, human-rights and anti-corruption organisations — should be tax-deductible, with safeguards against abuse and transparent reporting. This strengthens civic participation, diversifies the funding base, and reduces financial vulnerability to governments or political donors.

45

Youth platforms for direct democratic participation

Young citizens must be full
contributors to public life
— not passive subjects.

A statutory Youth Council Framework should require each local council and region to create democratically elected youth councils with: (a) consultation rights on youth-relevant decisions; (b) the right to issue formal responses to strategies and policies; and (c) a budget for civic projects. Youth voices should shape the future, not wait for it.

46

Community partnerships for stewardship of public spaces

**Public spaces should be co-owned
by institutions and communities.**

Councils should be empowered to establish Community Stewardship Agreements with resident groups, schools, NGOs, and cultural organisations to maintain, animate and govern parks, cultural venues, sports facilities and heritage sites. Incentives such as micro-grants and access to unused public premises should support community initiatives that build social capital.

The background features a light blue gradient with a cluster of white gears of various sizes on the left side. Below the gears, there is a stylized white lightbulb shape composed of several horizontal bars of varying lengths.

PILLAR E

The Public Interest Must Win

A Republic is not measured only by how it distributes power, but by whether the State acts for the common good. When public authority is diverted toward private gain, partisan interest, or impunity for the powerful, democracy becomes a façade. The reforms in this pillar ensure that State power is exercised for the whole community — not for insiders, influencers or clients.

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47

Citizenship must reflect genuine belonging — not purchasing power

Citizenship should symbolise membership in the community, not a financial transaction.

The law should prohibit all forms of citizenship-by-investment or “investment migration” schemes. Naturalisation criteria should require meaningful residence, community ties and objective integration requirements, with decisions publishable in anonymised statistics and subject to judicial review. Citizenship must express long-term contribution and belonging, not market access.

48

Equality before the law must apply especially to powerful actors

The justice system must work the same for everyone — including those with influence.

Legislation should introduce a Duty of Equal Treatment in Enforcement, obliging law-enforcement authorities and prosecutors to justify in writing any differential treatment in similar cases. Allegations involving high officials, elected officeholders or large public contracts should trigger mandatory escalation to specialised anti-corruption units.

Courts, judicial officers and court-appointed experts should be protected against harassment and coordinated smear campaigns by actors under investigation or their proxies. Legislation should prohibit the intimidation of judicial actors and allow for rapid injunctions and criminal penalties when media or public campaign activity is used to influence proceedings.

49

Restitution for victims of corruption and abuse of office

Corruption causes real social
harm — justice must repair it.

A National Restitution Fund should compensate individuals and communities who suffered financial loss, degraded services or safety failures due to corruption. Funds should be partly derived from confiscated assets and distributed through transparent judicial processes or settlement schemes. The goal is not only punishment — it is restoration of the public interest.

50

Social reuse of confiscated criminal and corruption assets

Stolen public resources should be
returned visibly to the public.

A Confiscated Assets Social Reuse Act should allocate assets recovered from corruption and organised crime to community projects, victim support, education and youth initiatives. This reform channels recovered resources into long-term social benefit rather than only symbolic measures. Allocation decisions must be taken independently of the government and published together with project outcomes.

51

Democracy and civic literacy as compulsory education

Democracy requires citizens who understand and can participate in public life.

The national curriculum should include structured civic education — covering rights, responsibilities, the Constitution, separation of powers, media literacy and ethics in public life — using methods that promote participation rather than rote learning. Student assemblies, democratic simulations and civic projects should be built into school life.

52

Electoral fairness through transparent political finance

Elections should be contests of ideas,
not contests of hidden money.

Political-finance law should require: (a) real-time publication of donations and loans; (b) public machine-readable accounts; (c) criminal sanctions for undeclared donations; (d) independent auditing; and (e) oversight by a Party Finance Commissioner structurally insulated from ministerial pressure. Outstanding GRECO recommendations underscore the urgency of this reform.

53

Integrity in public procurement must be guaranteed before money is spent

It should not require a scandal for the public to learn how contracts were awarded.

Government should adopt a national strategic procurement policy for high-value and high-risk public investments, requiring mandatory corruption-risk assessments, dedicated contract-management units, and automatic escalation of red flags to enforcement and audit bodies, building on the transparency and Integrity Pact obligations set out elsewhere in this memorandum. Procurement integrity protects both public finances and public trust.

54

A planning and environmental system that serves the public interest, not private capture

Land and natural resources belong to the community — not to developers or political networks.

Planning law should introduce: (a) a Public Interest Test for major developments; (b) disclosure of beneficial owners of applicant companies; (c) published regulator–applicant correspondence; and (d) legal standing for councils and recognised community groups in appeals. This reform protects shared national resources and environmental heritage from capture. Development decisions must be transparent, reasoned and accountable.

Any legislative amendments that reduce or restrict the courts’ power to review planning authority decisions should be repealed; judicial review is an essential safeguard against regulatory capture and must not be weakened.

55

Strong enforcement of equality rights — practical protection for the most vulnerable

A democracy is judged by how it protects
those with the least power.

Equality law should guarantee real enforcement, not symbolic rights, for persons facing discrimination, including persons with disabilities, migrants, children, older people and LGBTIQ+ people. This requires: (a) specialised equality procedures handled by trained adjudicators; (b) free legal aid and representation for victims of discrimination and hate crime; (c) emergency interim measures where discrimination risks serious harm; and (d) a statutory duty on public authorities and publicly funded bodies to prevent, detect and remedy discrimination proactively. Equality must function in everyday life — not only in court judgments.

56

Implementation of the Daphne Caruana Galizia public inquiry recommendations in full

Democratic transformation requires not
only acknowledgement of wrongdoing
but structural correction.

The public inquiry's institutional, legal and cultural reform proposals — including protection of journalism, checks on executive power, merit-based appointments and prevention of State capture — should be implemented comprehensively, not selectively. The purpose of reform is to prevent repetition, not to decorate memory.

PILLAR F

Human Rights and Equal Dignity for All

A Republic must protect every person equally — not only the powerful, the vocal or the well-connected. Human rights are not symbolic principles but enforceable obligations. When rights depend on discretion, charity, ancestry or financial status, equality collapses and exclusion becomes normalised. The reforms in this pillar ensure that the law protects every person in Malta and enables them to participate fully in community and national life.

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Human rights protections enforceable erga omnes — not aspirational

Fundamental rights must bind all
State bodies without exception.

The Constitution should provide that human rights are erga omnes obligations, (binding on all institutions of the State) enforceable against Parliament, Government, public authorities, regulators and State-owned entities. Courts should have the power to annul laws and administrative decisions that breach fundamental rights. Officials should be personally liable for intentional violations.

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A National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) with full Paris Principles accreditation

Human rights protection must not depend on government priorities.

Malta should establish an NHRI with powers to receive and investigate complaints, inspect detention facilities, intervene in court cases and issue binding recommendations requiring formal response. The appointment of NHRI leadership should require a parliamentary supermajority, and its budget must be protected in law.

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Political and civic participation for long-term residents

Participation in local democracy should
reflect genuine community membership.

Legislation should grant long-term residents the right to vote and stand for office in local elections, and the right to participate in civic consultations and community decision-making. Inclusion strengthens social cohesion and reflects the lived reality of Malta's towns and cities.

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A clear and fair pathway to citizenship for long-term and second-generation residents

Belonging should be based on contribution and community, not ancestry or financial capacity.

The Citizenship Act should provide predictable, transparent routes to citizenship for long-term residents and for children born and educated in Malta to non-citizen parents. Residence periods should be reasonable, integration requirements should be objective, and all decisions should be subject to judicial review.

6I

A specialised Equality Tribunal with real powers and fast, enforceable remedies

Equality is meaningless if discrimination claims take years or end without consequences.

Equality legislation should create a dedicated Equality Tribunal with: (a) binding decision-making power equivalent to a court; (b) strict case-management timelines, including urgent procedures where discrimination risks serious harm; (c) authority to order reinstatement, damages, policy change and corrective action; (d) power to impose administrative penalties and compliance orders on public bodies and regulated private entities; and (e) a monitoring mandate to ensure judgments are implemented and not ignored. Appeals should not suspend enforcement except on narrow constitutional grounds. Equality must be enforceable quickly, affordably and with teeth.

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Human dignity in all places of detention and institutional care

Deprivation of liberty must never
entail loss of dignity.

Unannounced inspections of prisons, detention centres, psychiatric facilities, youth homes and elderly care institutions should be mandatory, with powers to obtain documents and compel corrective measures. Staff misconduct should carry disciplinary and criminal liability. Dignity does not stop at the gate.

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Rights-based migration and asylum governance

Migration laws and border controls must respect human dignity and the rule of law.

Malta should adopt a Migration and Asylum Charter guaranteeing timely asylum decisions, access to work, education, and legal assistance, the prohibition of arbitrary detention, and independent oversight of removal procedures. Enforcement must be lawful, transparent and reviewable.

Search-and-rescue operations within Malta's SAR zone must comply with international maritime and human-rights obligations. Distress calls must be acted upon without discrimination, and coordination delays leading to avoidable loss of life should trigger automatic review and accountability procedures. Human dignity applies at sea as on land.

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Full legal continuity and equal recognition for all family types in every setting

Family equality must exist not only in legislation but in every legal, administrative and social setting where families interact with the State.

Family law should guarantee automatic and uniform recognition of parenthood for children in same-sex and non-marital families, including recognition of parenthood established abroad and automatic listing of both parents at birth. Adoption and medically assisted reproduction should consistently apply the best interests of the child standard, without administrative disparity between different family structures. Legislation should prohibit discrimination against non-traditional families in schools, healthcare, housing, social security, taxation and migration procedures, with a fast-tracked enforcement mechanism where services deny equal treatment. The child must never lose rights or protection because the State does not recognise their parents. Equality for families is not just legal wording — it must function everywhere families meet the State.

65

Accessibility and inclusion as universal public duties

Everyone must be able to
participate fully in society.

Public buildings, transport systems and digital public services should be subject to enforceable accessibility standards with fixed compliance deadlines. Persons with disabilities must have access to independent living supports and assisted decision-making when required — not forced institutionalisation.

66

Human- and Child-Rights Impact Assessments for All Laws and Budgets

Human rights must be integrated into policy design—not only defended after harm occurs.

All primary legislation, major regulatory reforms, and annual budgets should require Human- and Child-Rights Impact Assessments, published before parliamentary debate, that evaluate foreseeable effects on fundamental rights, equality before the law, non-discrimination, dignity, and the best interests of the child. Negative findings should trigger a duty to revise the proposal or provide a publicly reasoned justification. Rights should constrain government action at the moment of policy formation — not only in court years later.

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Safeguarding the Commons

The protection of fundamental rights and freedoms is necessary for human flourishing, but not sufficient: neither individual persons nor communities can flourish unless what we know as ‘the commons’ are protected and managed sustainably.

Malta’s commons – the air we breathe, the natural water supply, biodiversity, rural and wilderness areas of outstanding natural beauty, built heritage, public spaces, the Maltese language itself, and other intangible cultural heritage are all under threat from a variety of powerful forces, including climate change, the relentless building spree, over-exploitation, misappropriation by private commercial interests, poor enforcement, immigration and over-tourism. The commons sustain life in these islands, yet the State, which is legally empowered to protect them, is all too often complicit in their exploitation and destruction. Lacking any legal or professional independence, the State agencies that are supposedly established to manage and conserve them are captured by overweening private interests.

Chapter 2 of the Constitution should be redrafted to declare the commons and to offer protections on par with those for fundamental rights and freedoms. The Planning Authority and the Environment and Resources Authority should be granted the status and independence enjoyed by other constitutional bodies. At the same time, local councils and non-governmental organisations should be accorded the constitutional right to participate in policy-making on land and resource use, environmental protection and heritage planning, and to bring class action suits against planning proposals or decisions. State land and water resources, which are routinely dispensed as patronage by ministers, should be transferred to the custody of an independent Environment and Resources Authority.

The background features a large, faint graphic of a lightbulb. Inside the bulb, there are several interlocking gears of different sizes, symbolizing a complex system or process. The entire graphic is rendered in a light blue-grey color, providing a subtle backdrop for the text.

Implementation Roadmap

(2026–2031)

This programme is designed to be feasible within a single five-year parliamentary term. The sequence below groups reforms by realistic dependencies and administrative workload. Measures that require constitutional change can run in parallel with operational reforms.

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PHASE 1

Foundations

(MONTHS 1–12)

Lay the structural groundwork for democratic renewal.

- ▶ Constitutional Reform Act establishing a permanent democratic process
 - ▶ Full-time Parliament and strengthened committee oversight
- ▶ Independent appointments and removals for judiciary, policing, regulators and financial-intelligence leadership
 - ▶ Sunset clauses for exceptional executive powers
 - ▶ Legal protection for civil society and journalists
 - ▶ Overhaul of FOI and open public registers
- ▶ National Anti-Corruption Strategy tabled in Parliament

OUTCOME

Oversight structures become independent of the Executive; transparency becomes the default.

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PHASE 2

Enforcement and Accountability

(MONTHS 13–24)

Make the rule of law operational, not rhetorical.

- ▶ Anti-Corruption Authority with power to prosecute
- ▶ Full-time inquiring magistrates + specialised prosecution unit
- ▶ Anti-Mafia framework + unexplained-wealth confiscation
- ▶ Criminalisation of State Capture
- ▶ Integrity Pacts and corruption-risk assessments for major contracts
- ▶ Transparency rules for private media influence and political finance

OUTCOME

Corruption and organised crime can be investigated and punished effectively, regardless of office or wealth.

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PHASE 3

Decentralisation and Civic Participation

(MONTHS 25–36)

Empower communities rather than ministries.

- ▶ Autonomous local councils with protected core powers
- ▶ Predictable financing + optional local taxation with safeguards
 - ▶ Participatory budgeting across all councils
- ▶ Citizens' Assemblies for major planning and environmental decisions
 - ▶ Youth councils and community stewardship frameworks

OUTCOME

Local democracy gains real authority; citizens influence decisions shaping their environment and community.

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PHASE 4

Human Rights and Equal Dignity for All

(MONTHS 37–48)

Ensure equality and dignity function in practice — not only on paper.

- ▶ National Human Rights Institution (Paris Principles compliant)
 - ▶ Enforceable erga omnes human-rights obligations
 - ▶ Equality Tribunal with fast, binding remedies
 - ▶ Rights-based migration & asylum governance
- ▶ Fair pathway to citizenship for long-term residents and second-generation youth
 - ▶ Accessibility and independent-living reforms

OUTCOME

Everyone in Malta enjoys practical and enforceable protection of rights and equality before the law.

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PHASE 5

Consolidation and Evaluation

(MONTHS 49–60)

Lock reforms in so they cannot be reversed.

- ▶ Rule-of-Law Scorecard Act and annual parliamentary reviews
- ▶ Human- and Child-Rights Impact Assessments for all laws and budgets
- ▶ Public audit of procurement and social reuse of confiscated assets
- ▶ Full implementation review of Daphne Caruana Galizia inquiry recommendations
- ▶ Constitutional protections for the commons and independent resource authorities
- ▶ Final evaluation of reform delivery and planning for the next legislature

OUTCOME

Reforms become self-sustaining and resistant to political cycles.

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KEY REFORMS AT A GLANCE

The following core reforms capture the structural transformation required to renew Malta's democracy within one 5-year parliamentary term

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Checks and balances — limiting concentrated power

- ▶ Constitutional reform through a permanent democratic process — not private deals between party leaders.

- ▶ Independent appointments and removals for the judiciary, police, regulators, FIAU and State leadership — no single office controls them.

- ▶ Full-time Parliament with financial independence from the Executive and strong committee powers.

- ▶ Strict limitations on “positions of trust” and caps on political appointees across government.

- ▶ Annual Rule-of-Law Scorecard with mandatory parliamentary scrutiny.

- ▶ Legislative Impact Statements ensuring compatibility with constitutional principles.

- ▶ Sunset clauses for exceptional executive powers, preventing them from becoming permanent.

Ending impunity — enforcing the rule of law

- ▶ A single Anti-Corruption Authority with the power to prosecute, independent from ministers and the Attorney General.

- ▶ Full-time inquiring magistrates and a specialised prosecution division for financial and organised crime.

- ▶ Police Commissioner appointment and removal are insulated from political control.

- ▶ Anti-Mafia law + unexplained wealth confiscation + liability for professional enablers.

- ▶ Criminalisation of State Capture as a standalone offence.

- ▶ Corruption-Risk Impact Assessments for major infrastructure projects.

Accountability — transparency and media freedom

- ▶ Anti-SLAPP legislation with early dismissal and punitive costs for abusive lawsuits.
- ▶ Independent protection mechanism for journalists — replacing the Media Security Committee.
- ▶ Reform of PBS & Broadcasting Authority to guarantee independence from ministers and political parties.
- ▶ FOI overhaul and open public registers for beneficial ownership, procurement, political donations and public spending.
- ▶ Digital-security protections for journalists (anti-hacking, anti-doxxing, anti-SIGINT abuse).

Empowered communities — decentralisation and civic participation

- ▶ Autonomous local councils with protected core powers and predictable financing.

- ▶ Participatory budgeting — residents decide at least 5% of local spending.

- ▶ Citizens' Assemblies for major planning, environmental and digital-rights decisions.

- ▶ Legal protection for civil society as watchdog, not client of the State.

Public interest — not private or partisan advantage

- ▶ End to all forms of citizenship-for-investment — belonging based on connection, not wealth.
- ▶ National Restitution Fund & social reuse of confiscated assets — public pays the cost, public receives the benefit.
- ▶ Transparent political finance — real-time disclosure, independent auditing and sanctions for illicit funding.
- ▶ Full implementation of the Daphne Caruana Galizia Inquiry recommendations — not selective adoption.

Human rights and equal dignity

- ▶ Enforceable erga omnes obligations across all State bodies.
- ▶ National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) with full Paris Principles accreditation.
- ▶ Human- & Child-Rights Impact Assessments for all laws and budgets, published before parliamentary debate.