

31st Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services

Valletta, Malta — 4 June 2026

CLOSING ADDRESS

On behalf of the Government of Malta

Ministry for Home Affairs, Security and Employment

Grand Hotel Excelsior, Valletta — 4 June 2026

Distinguished guests, Directors, colleagues and friends,

I will be brief.

I stepped into this role less than two hours ago, and I can say with confidence that there could be no better way to start than by closing a prestigious conference such as this.

I understand that over the past two days, you have not simply exchanged views – you have asked difficult questions and sought to answer them, shared practical experience, and, most importantly, kept the focus where it belongs: on vulnerable people.

I understand that you have explored complex and critical issues – vulnerability, dignity, and the transition from custody back into the community. That transition is one of the most challenging moments, where lives can either stabilise or unravel.

These are not side questions; they go to the heart of what our systems stand for.

What we should all take from this Conference is not a list of conclusions, but a clear direction – one that is centred on people, grounded in professionalism, and strengthened through cooperation.

For Malta, that direction is one we are committed to pursuing.

Our Government has reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining a prison system that is safe, orderly and founded on respect, while continuing to address the challenges posed by drugs and addiction through both enforcement and rehabilitation. This reflects our belief that security, dignity and rehabilitation must go hand in hand.

In the few hours since taking on this responsibility, I have already come to appreciate the dedication of the professionals who work across Malta's correctional and probation services. From correctional officers on the frontline to the many professionals and support staff who contribute every day, their work requires commitment, professionalism, resilience and sound judgement. Each plays an important role in maintaining security, supporting rehabilitation and ensuring the effective functioning of our services.

Modern correctional services must maintain a careful balance: ensuring security and good order while creating an environment that supports rehabilitation and personal

responsibility. These objectives are not in competition with one another; they reinforce each other.

A safe, respectful and well-managed environment provides the foundation upon which meaningful rehabilitation can take place.

I am encouraged by the efforts being made to support both staff and persons in custody, fostering a professional culture built on respect, accountability and collaboration. When correctional officers, professional staff and community partners work together, they create opportunities for individuals to make positive changes and prepare for a successful return to society.

We are on a deliberate journey of reform, supporting those who carry this responsibility every day, and always open to learning from our partners across Europe.

We will not always get it right – no system does. But the standard of honest, continuous improvement that Malta's correctional leadership has demonstrated, and that this Conference has exemplified, is one I am fully committed to supporting.

Let me also thank the Council of Europe, the organisers, and all those who contributed to making this Conference a success – thank you for bringing this conversation to Malta.

And to all of you who work in this field every day, in whatever country, and in whatever role: your work is not easy, but it matters deeply. It is seen. It is valued.

I hope you leave Malta not only with new ideas, but with renewed purpose and stronger connections.

Thank you.