

KAMRA TAD-DEPUTATI



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PARLAMENT TA' MALTA

*L-iSpeaker*

*The Speaker*

*Z. W.* October 2023

**Ms Dunja Mijatović**  
Commissioner for Human Rights  
Council of Europe

Reference is made to your letter dated 26 September 2023 concerning the Bills currently on the Parliament's agenda to amend provisions of the Constitution and various other laws, with the overall aim of strengthening freedom of expression and the right to privacy, and introducing measures to protect the media and journalists.

I agree that parliaments play an important role in securing wide and public consultations on many issues that affect people's lives and impact their basic rights. I am a firm believer that access to transparent and timely information about Parliament's legislative work is essential in a well-functioning modern democracy, and this can only hold true if journalists can perform their work freely and safely.

With regard to Parliament's openness and transparency, in 2015, with the move to the new Parliament Building, I insisted that all plenary sittings and committee meetings be streamed live and on-demand via the Parliamentary website, and also broadcast live on a dedicated Parliament TV channel giving priority to the live debates in Plenary. This new facility was of course in addition the existing right to follow in-person the plenary sittings and the committee meetings, which are by default all open to the public, including journalists.

Additionally, in 2016 the Maltese Parliament also amended its Standing Orders to enable any Maltese citizen to submit, electronically, petitions directly to Parliament. These petitions, the subjects of which are wide-ranging, are displayed on the Parliament website and may be signed by any citizen within a specified timeframe signifying support.

With regard to the concern you raised in your letter that the current text of the proposals regarding SLAPP is inadequate, I wish to point out that the debate at Second Reading stage on the media reform legislation has not yet commenced, and there has not yet been any discussion either on the principles or on the individual provisions of the relative bills. Thus, from a procedural point of view, there remains ample opportunity for the relative bills to be amended upon submissions from both sides of the House.

As you may have followed, the Maltese Government, by way of Press Release 231354 of 13 September 2023, has stated that the report of the Media Experts Committee, tasked with reviewing the media reform proposals currently on the Parliament's agenda, will be tabled during the first sitting of Parliament after the Summer break, which is in fact today. According to the same press release this report followed a consultation process led by the Experts Committee.

In this regard, as requested in your letter, I have also forwarded your letter to both parliamentary Whips. Earlier today I was informed that it is the intention of the Opposition to move a motion in Parliament to set up a Parliamentary Select Committee once the report of the Media Experts Committee is tabled in Parliament in order to hold a public consultation on the proposed legislative reform.

Yours sincerely

Anglu Farrugia  
Speaker



Cc: Hon. Andy Ellul, Government Whip  
Hon. Robert Cutajar, Opposition Whip