



OMBUDSPLAN 2027


OMBUDSMAN

OMBUDSPLAN 2027





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OMBUDSPLAN 2027





The Parliamentary Ombudsman during a courtesy call on the Speaker of the House, the Hon. Carmelo Abela



The Parliamentary Ombudsman meeting the European Ombudsman, Teresa Anjinho, during her visit to Malta in October 2025

THE LAW

For the purposes of this document, reference is made to Article 10(4) of the Ombudsman Act 1995 (Chapter 385 of the Laws of Malta). This article provides that the finance required for the Ombudsman's salary and allowances and for the resources of his Office shall not exceed a maximum amount indicated in an Ombudsplan approved by the House of Representatives and shall be a charge on the Consolidated Fund without any further appropriation. The Ombudsman shall present to the House by the 15th day of September of each year an Ombudsplan which will indicate the ensuing year's activities. This document and its contents are in accordance with the requirements of this provision.

FUNCTIONS

Whether on the basis of a written complaint or on their 'own initiative', the Ombudsman and the Commissioners investigate any action (and that includes not taking any) of Government [as defined in Article 1(2) and stipulated in Article 12(1) of Chapter 385] in the exercise of its administrative functions.

1. INVESTIGATIONS

Investigations are the core function of the Office. The Ombudsman and the Commissioners seek to determine whether there has been maladministration or not by Government. Although 'maladministration' is not defined, the concept in our law draws its



The Parliamentary Ombudsman during a visit to Identità



The Parliamentary Ombudsman meeting the senior management of Identità

source from Art 22(1) and (2) of Chapter 385. Sub-article (1) states:

“The provisions of this article shall apply in every case where, after making any investigation under this Act, the Ombudsman is of opinion that the decision, recommendation, act or omission which was the subject-matter of the investigation – (a) appears to have been contrary to law; or (b) was unreasonable, unjust, oppressive, or improperly discriminatory, or was in accordance with a law or a practice that is or may be unreasonable, unjust, oppressive, or improperly discriminatory; or (c) was based wholly or partly on a mistake of law or fact; or (d) was wrong.”

Sub-article (2) states:

“The provisions of this article shall also apply in any case where the Ombudsman is of opinion that in the making of the decision or recommendation, or in the doing or omission of the act, a discretionary power has been exercised for an improper purpose or on irrelevant grounds or on the taking into account of irrelevant considerations, or that, in the case of a decision made in the exercise of any discretionary power, reasons should have been given for the decision.”

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

When an investigation concludes with a final opinion in favour of the complainant, the findings carry persuasive weight. Recommendations are evidence-based, proportionate, balanced and practically implementable. Above all fairness and justice are the ultimate considerations and the *raison d'être* that governs the mandate of the Ombudsman.

Although the Ombudsman does not have executive authority to ensure that recommendations are enforced, the institution looks out for means how to facilitate fair redress. This *modus operandi* does work in the majority of cases. In others resistance not to implement within the public sector depends many a time on the persons leading the public service entity concerned rather than the merits of the complaint itself.

It is a proven practice worldwide that the objective of the investigation is not only to determine maladministration and recommend redress, but also to identify and recommend changes in administrative practices, including changes to legislation, when these are found to be the source of the complaint.

3. “BRIDGE-BUILDING”

The Office continues to believe that, when available, informal methods of finding solutions for complaints should be encouraged, provided there is goodwill, and provided issues are treated with an open mind. This approach highlights the problem-solving character of ombuds practice. The Ombudsman is designed to be a solution-oriented institution and therefore resolution through dialogue with public bodies is crucial. By raising concerns informally, the Ombudsman allows public administrators to look around and correct whatever requires adjustment and improvement, in order to make matters better for the public.

Over the past decade, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has increasingly given credit to ombudsman institutions for being important pillars of open government, integrity, accountability, administrative justice and



The Parliamentary Ombudsman addressing the Artificial Intelligence Governance Council at the MDIA



The Parliamentary Ombudsman meeting the senior management of Identità

democratic governance. The OECD has declared that “Ombudsman institutions (OIs) act as the guardians of citizens’ rights and as a mediator between citizens and the public administration”; that “while the very existence of such institutions is rooted in the notion of open government, the role they can play in promoting openness throughout the public administration has not been adequately recognized or exploited”; that “ombudsman institutions can promote transparency, integrity, accountability, and stakeholder participation.”

ACTIVITIES - 2027

1. PUBLIC OUTREACH

In the coming year, the Office will continue in its wide-ranging outreach activities with the public through public meetings, seminars and engagements of all sorts including with the media. The Office believes strongly that outreach initiatives are not only in the interest of the institution but also of the public and the public service itself. These initiatives include also publications.

2. PUBLICATIONS

I. CASE NOTES

In 2027, the Ombudsman will be publishing the 46th edition of the Case Notes since the Office was established in 1995. The publication is a compendium of the more important investigations carried out by the Ombudsman and the Commissioners in 2026.

The publication is intended to reach as wide a readership as possible and will embrace a range of subjects and grievances that should be of interest to many, including public service

bodies. The work will contain a summary of the investigations, the core issues that were identified, and the outcome. All are explained in a manner specifically designed for all to understand and consider.

The Case Notes help the reader value and appreciate the need for the application of the principles of good governance in the administrative operations of public services and practices. Public bodies should find the Case Notes useful and a means to understand more constructively the concerns and grievances of the public. The publication helps public service providers to improve their standards and better the quality of their services, including improvements in their methodology and procedures.

Casework can be a driver of systemic change for the better and helps educate public administrators and the public itself to value what fairness is all about. When multiple complaints arise concerning common policy or procedures, then patterns can be detected and directed to the public service for quick intervention and possibly effective solutions.

II. RESEARCH STUDY

Next year as well, the Office will be publishing a research study that was commissioned to Professor Edward Warrington entitled: ‘The Mind of the Parliamentary Ombudsman of Malta: Philosopher, Champion, Mediator 1995 – 2025’.

Professor Warrington, a retired leading academic in public administration of the University of Malta, has published various studies, including on the history of state audit in Malta (with Professor Godfrey Pirota, 2001, 2014), the Ombudsman (1999, 2020), the design of governing institutions for emerging



The Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Education during a meeting with the MCAST Principal



Group photo during the Council of Europe High Level Conference with Ombudsperson Institutions and National Human Rights Institutions, Strasbourg, March 2026

polities (1999) and patterns of government in island states (2022).

Over the past three decades, significant research has been undertaken on the workings of the Ombudsman as an oversight institution. Scholars have documented its history, analysed its legal status, examined its operations, and appraised its relations with Government. This notwithstanding, there appears to be limited awareness and appreciation of what is the 'mind' of the institution in the sense of its philosophy of governance and administration.

The institution is perennially 'work-in-progress'. This fact emerges from the interplay of legally mandated values, attitudes and perceptions of successive office-holders, streams of thought and action. The study takes an inquisitive approach by referring to the development of patterns and standards, together with issues of shifts in the orientation, operations and concerns of the institution.

3. GOVERNMENT

In the coming year, the Office will insist on its initiatives to ensure that public servants appreciate and understand deeper and better the investigative and oversight role of the Office. This includes stressing the point that although recommendations by the Office do not constitute executive orders, nonetheless public officials are under an obligation of good governance that whenever they decide not to implement recommendations, they have to give reasons and sustain their refusal or reluctance not to implement, to enable the Ombudsman to examine and assess those reasons. Despite not being binding,

recommendations carry strong moral authority which is not an abstract matter of academic interest. Recommendations cannot be disregarded without accountability, are not optional in any casual sense of the term and therefore cannot be sidelined without explanation.

Public bodies have a duty to co-operate with the Ombudsman. That includes responding to enquiries, investigations, findings and recommendations. Responding includes stating what steps public bodies have taken or intend to take when critical or sensitive issues arise, or in case of acceptance, how will they comply with recommendations. Giving reasons as to why recommendations will not be implemented is not a formality because failure by a public body to give reasons, or when manifestly inadequate reasons are given, constitutes a failure to co-operate.

When a public body rejects a recommendation and gives reasons, the Ombudsman may examine whether those reasons are factually accurate, legally sound, rational, proportionate and consistent with Art 22(1) and (2) of Chapter 385 (*supra*) and with the general principles of good administration. The reasons given by a public body to the Ombudsman not to implement recommendations, or not giving any reasons for non-implementation, are issues that an Ombudsman will take into account when discretion is exercised to refer an unimplemented final opinion to the Hon. Prime Minister and, if required, to the House of Representatives in terms of Article 22(4) of Chapter 385.



The Parliamentary Ombudsman during a meeting with the Head of UNHCR Malta, Emilie Wiinblad Mathez

In the United Kingdom, the recommendations of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman are not binding, but public bodies are expected to respond and explain their acceptance or refusal. The Ombudsman has to be given reasons for action taken or the reasons for not complying in which case the Ombudsman will examine the reasons and assess whether the reasons for refusal are adequate. A special report may be sent to Parliament. Through its Select Committees, the House of Commons may summon the public body to sustain a refusal to implement.

In Canada, both at the provincial and at the federal level, recommendations of Ombudsmen are non-binding, but public bodies have a duty to co-operate with Ombudsmen and give reasons for non-compliance with their recommendations. The fact itself of failure to give reasons is considered maladministration. When reasons for refusal are given, Ombudsmen evaluate whether the

refusal to implement is reasonable, evidence-based, and legally defensible.

In Australia, both as regards the Commonwealth as well as the State Ombudsmen, public agencies have to justify the non-implementation of recommendations.

Likewise in New Zealand. The Ombudsmen Act 1975 of New Zealand was the model adopted for the drafting and enactment of the Ombudsman Act 1995 of Malta. In New Zealand, bodies and agencies of Government are required to advise what steps have been taken or are proposed to be taken following receipt of recommendations from Ombudsmen. Refusals must be reasoned, and the reasons can be reviewed by Ombudsmen. When reasons are found to be unsatisfactory, Parliament can be alerted.



The Parliamentary Ombudsman presenting the first Ombudsman Prize in Law to Ms Jodie Mary Farrugia in recognition of her dissertation titled 'Guardian of Good Governance: Expanding the Jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Ombudsman in Malta'

The effectiveness of an ombudsman system depends upon a structured dialogue between the Ombudsman and public authorities. That presupposes that recommendations will be taken seriously, that refusals will be reasoned, and that the reasons given will themselves be open to independent scrutiny.

An interpretation that denies the Ombudsman the right to receive and evaluate reasons for non-implementation, that would permit public bodies to reject recommendations without explanation, or to shield their refusal, would undermine legislative intent and weaken public administrative accountability. The role of an Ombudsman to secure reasoned engagement when maladministration is determined would be frustrated if public bodies were permitted to treat recommendations as exempt from critical review. When an Ombudsman finds maladministration and

recommends a remedy, the public body is entitled to disagree. But it is not entitled to disagree silently or unreasonably. If a public authority can simply decline and close the file, then the Ombudsman system becomes a decorative ornament rather than a constitutional safeguard.

4. THE EU PACT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

The Pact was adopted by the European Parliament on the 10 April 2024 and by the Council of the European Union on the 14 May 2024. The legislative instruments forming the Pact were published in the Official Journal and became EU law on the 11 June 2024. The new rules came into force on the **12 June 2026**, after a two-year transition period for preparation and national implementation.



The Parliamentary Ombudsman meeting MCAST journalism students



The Parliamentary Ombudsman delivering a lecture during the MA in Governance and Ombudsman Law course at the University of Malta

The Pact involves ten (10) legislative instruments (one Directive and nine Regulations):

- 1 Directive (EU) 2024/1346
Reception Conditions Directive (recast)
- 2 Regulation (EU) 2024/1347
Qualification Regulation
- 3 Regulation (EU) 2024/1348
Asylum Procedures Regulation
- 4 Regulation (EU) 2024/1349
Border Return Procedure Regulation
- 5 Regulation (EU) 2024/1350
Resettlement and Humanitarian
Admission Framework Regulation

- 6 Regulation (EU) 2024/1351
The Asylum and Migration Management
Regulation
- 7 Regulation (EU) 2024/1352
“Alignment” / Consequential
Amendments Regulation
- 8 Regulation (EU) 2024/1356
The Screening Regulation
- 9 Regulation (EU) 2024/1358
The Eurodac (Recast) Regulation
- 10 Regulation (EU) 2024/1359
The Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation



The Parliamentary Ombudsman visiting MCAST Freshers' Week



The Parliamentary Ombudsman delivering a keynote address at the World Services Group European Meeting in Malta

The fair and reasonable implementation of the legal instruments that give substance to the Pact is under careful scrutiny especially balancing responsibility and solidarity among Member States while upholding European values and international protection rights. The EU Commission has publicly declared that it will not keep back from commencing infringement proceedings against Member States who fail to meet their obligations arising out of the legal instruments that are now in force. The success or otherwise of the Pact will be measured by whether it can both deliver a more equitable sharing of responsibilities among EU Member States and uphold commitments to protect those who seek refuge.

5. THE SCREENING REGULATION [REGULATION (EU) 2024/1356]

Out of the ten legal instruments, the one that refers to the role of the Ombudsman is the Screening Regulation.

The Regulation marks a significant development in the approach of the EU to migration. A structured pre-entry screening procedure is introduced for irregular third-country nationals, those who apply for international protection at the external borders or are disembarked following search and rescue operations. The procedure is designed to take place quickly and includes identity verification, security checks, health and vulnerability assessments, biometric registration, and referral to the appropriate follow-up procedure.

The Regulation introduces mandatory pre-entry screening of all irregular arrivals at the external borders of the EU (including identity, security, and health checks), from the very start looks and identifies vulnerabilities, children, victims of human trafficking, or people with special needs, directs people swiftly either to asylum procedures, return procedures, or refusal of entry improves security and data consistency through systematic registration



The Parliamentary Ombudsman during a meeting of the European Network of Ombudsmen in Brussels

and checks in EU database, and enhances independent oversight during screening.

Art 10 of the Regulation makes provision for the creation of an Independent Screening Mechanism (“ISM”) to oversee compliance with fundamental rights during screening at the external borders.

The Regulation determines the **functions**:

a) to monitor compliance with Union and international law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights, in particular as regards access to the asylum procedure, the principle of non-refoulement (i.e. prohibiting a country from returning by deportation, expulsion or extradition of persons to a place where they would face serious threats to their life or freedom) the best interest of the child and the relevant rules on detention, including relevant provisions on detention in national law, during the screening.

b) to ensure that substantiated allegations of failure to respect fundamental rights in all relevant activities in relation to the screening are dealt with effectively and without undue delay, activate, where necessary, investigations into such allegations and monitor the progress of such investigations.

The Regulation does not impose an institutional model for Member States to follow for the set-up of the structure of the ISM but leaves the matter to the Member States to determine. Having an ISM is not optional but mandatory. It is a structural component designed to ensure that efficiency does not undermine legality and that border management remains anchored in the rule of law.

The Regulation directs the Fundamental Rights Agency (“FRA”) of the EU to issue general guidance for Member States on the

establishment of the ISM and its independent functioning. On their part, Member States may request FRA to support them in developing their ISM, including the safeguards for independence of such mechanisms, as well as the monitoring methodology and appropriate training schemes.

Art 10(2) is very specific on the **legal requirements** that have to subsist for the ISM to carry out its mandate.

“Member States shall put in place adequate safeguards to guarantee the independence of the independent monitoring mechanism.”

National Ombudspersons and national human rights institutions, including national preventive mechanisms established under the OPCAT, **shall participate** in the operation of the independent monitoring mechanism and may be appointed to carry out all or part of the tasks of the independent monitoring mechanism.

The independent monitoring mechanism may also involve relevant international and non-governmental organisations and public bodies independent from the authorities carrying out the screening.

Insofar as one or more of those institutions, organisations or bodies are not directly involved in the independent monitoring mechanism, the independent monitoring mechanism shall establish and maintain close links with them.

The independent monitoring mechanism shall establish and maintain close links with the national data protection authorities and the European Data Protection Supervisor.”

The provision is **strict and mandatory** in the sense that it requires the Ombudsman to participate in the ISM.

On the 6 August 2026, the Ombudsman sent a letter to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for Home Affairs and Security,



The Parliamentary Ombudsman addressing a high level conference commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Ombudsman Institution of the Republic of Kosovo

whereby after referring to the coming into force of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, to the Screening Regulation [Regulation (EU) 2024/1356] and in particular to Art 10(2) of the Regulation, noted that as at the 6 August 2026 the Office of the Ombudsman was not informed on the appointment of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism in Malta nor was the Office called upon to participate in the operations of the ISM. Given the importance of the matter, a prompt response was requested.

The letter was copied to the Hon Minister of Home Affairs and Security, the Hon Prime Minister and the Principal Permanent Secretary.

As at the date of presentation of this Ombudsplan to the Hon. Mr. Speaker, the Ombudsman did not receive a response to that letter.

In the coming year, the Office will continue to actively pursue the matter.

UNACHIEVED PROPOSALS

In 2027, the Office will continue to pursue the introduction of measures which it considers beneficial in the interest of the common good and administrative justice.

1. SELECT COMMITTEE

One notes with regret that this matter is still unresolved.

In page 15 of the Ombudsplan for 2026, in page 13 of the Ombudsplan for 2025, and even before that, the Office made reference to the importance of having this Committee of Parliament constituted.

Appointing a Select Committee of the House of Representatives is crucial to determine conclusively on recommendations in final opinions of the Ombudsman and the Commissioners, which remain unimplemented by Government, and which, because they remain so, the Ombudsman and



The Parliamentary Ombudsman addressing the Liaison Officers' Meeting of the European Network of Ombudsmen in Málaga, Spain

the Commissioners, as Officers of Parliament, send to the House of Representatives for consideration in terms of Article 22(4) of Chapter 385.

The Office firmly believes that the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives should be updated to allow for unimplemented recommendations in final opinions to be referred to and debated by a Select Committee, with a remit to examine, consider and give directions to Government. The remit of the Select Committee can also include the quality and standards of services provided by the civil service and the public administration in general.

In the United Kingdom, following reports presented by the Parliamentary Ombudsman, oversight is carried out by a Select Committee of the House of Commons - the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC). The Select Committee reviews the reports of the Ombudsman and performance on behalf of Parliament.

In New Zealand the House of Representatives has a well-defined process for handling Ombudsman reports, precisely because the Ombudsmen are Officers of Parliament as they report directly to the House. According to the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, any report from an Ombudsman that is presented to the House is referred for examination as a matter of course to the Governance and Administration Select Committee. The Committee reports back to the House with its findings; the accountability loop is closed by the report of the Committee and any recommendations therein, to which the Government must respond. The approach in New Zealand guarantees that Ombudsman reports are considered at committee level and

not left to languish. The system is effective as it ensures parliamentary discussion (through the Select Committee) of the findings of the Office of the Chief Ombudsman.

2. THE RIGHT TO GOOD ADMINISTRATION

Reference has been made to this matter in the Ombudsplans 2026 (page 16) 2025 (page 17) and 2024 (page 19)

Nonetheless this matter remains unresolved.

The right to good administration that is already law within the context of the relations of the person with the institutions of the European Union (Art 41 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU) has not found application in our law for the purposes of the relations of the person with Government.

The Office holds on firmly to its belief that the principles of good administration should find application in our laws for domestic purposes, namely:

- a) that persons should have the right to see that their affairs are managed by public offices with impartiality, fairness and within a reasonable time.
- b) that persons should have the right to be heard before any individual measure is taken that would affect them adversely.
- c) that persons should have the right to free access to a file that affects them and held by Government [as defined in Article 1(2) and stipulated in Article 12(1) of Chapter 385].
- d) that public bodies should have an obligation to give reasons for their decisions.

A careful and systemic application into law

of these principles for domestic application would broaden further the rights of the person and would strengthen the rule of law.

3. SUSPENSION OF PRESCRIPTION

Reference was made to this proposal in the Ombudsplans 2024 (page 23), 2025 (page 22) and 2026 (page 17)

To date none has been done.

The Office reaffirms its position.

The law excludes the concurrence of proceedings before judicial and quasi-judicial bodies and investigations before the Ombudsman and Commissioners. Formal demands filed before a judicial or

quasi-judicial body take precedence. Any investigation by the Office has to stop until a case referring to litigation on the same subject matter becomes final and conclusive.

Suspending the prescription of actions against Government [as defined supra], when an investigation is being carried out by the Office and until its conclusion, would facilitate and extend even further access to justice.

In several jurisdictions (notably in the context of financial or consumer disputes in countries like South Africa, France, Germany, Belgium, and Canada), the law provides for suspension or interruption of periods of limitation of actions for the time when an ombudsman investigation or a mediation process is pending. This protects complainants from losing the right to sue while they seek relief through an ombudsman.



The Parliamentary Ombudsman addressing a conference on the establishment of a Public Defender for Sicily in Palermo, Italy

For the sake of a complete overview, there are other systems (UK and Portugal) that do not suspend prescription. At present, ours is a similar system. Nonetheless it requires to be rethought in order to dispense claimants from the burden of having to keep an eye on legal deadlines, especially when these are peremptory in nature.

4. NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTION (“NHRI”)

Specific reference was made to this matter in the Ombudsplan 2025 (page 22-23) and Ombudsplan 2026 (page 20 et seq) where in substance the Office had lamented the structural absence in our country of an NHRI, an important institution that is designed to strengthen the rule of law and the protection of the rights and freedoms of the person.

In the hearings of the Ombudsplan before the House Business Committee of the House of Representatives, the Office had insisted in very clear and unequivocal terms that it was unacceptable that our country should be one

(1) of the only two (2) Member States of the European Union to remain without an NHRI.

In no stage was the Office concerned on the issue of the constitution of an Equality body, because the matter has already been addressed in our legislation.

The concern of the Office related to the fact that an NHRI was so conspicuous by the absence of its constitution in this country.

Following the last general election, the First Reading of a National Commission for Human Rights and Equality Bill (No. 3/2026) were presented before the newly constituted House of Representatives on the 30 June 2026 followed by the publication of the Bill itself.

The Bill did not become law. The reasons are public knowledge.

Because of its constitutional mandate, the Office will refrain from entering into any debate on the reasons or otherwise why the Bill did not become law.



The Parliamentary Ombudsman addressing a conference organised by The Malta Chamber



The Parliamentary Ombudsman, in his capacity as Vice President of the IOI European Regional Board, together with Board members during a meeting with the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions, ENNHRI

However, for the sake of transparency and good order, the Ombudsman will explain to the House what was done by the Office, largely alone for most of two years, to push forward the constitution of an NHRI in this country:

- The Ombudsman is a core component of the safeguards that persons should enjoy in a democratic state. By taking a human rights-based approach, the rights of persons are placed at the centre of the work of the Ombudsman vis-à-vis public bodies providing public services to ensure that policies, processes and actions are shaped in a manner whereby all rights, including human rights, are protected.
- In the course of the 13th Legislature (2017-2022) two Bills were brought before the House: the Equality Bill (96/2019) and the Human Rights and Equality Commission Bill (97/2019). The two Bills were debated but never became law because they lapsed
- when the House was dissolved on the 20 February 2022 and a general election was called.
- In the course of the 14th Legislature (2022-2026) the two Bills were not repropoed. Nor was any other Bill proposed to create an NHRI.
- After the 8 March 2023, the Office made public its position for the appointment of an independent and constitutionally protected NHRI in accordance with the Paris Principles of the United Nations.
- That was the clear starting position of the Office. Despite that position, an NHRI Bill was not presented before the House.
- In the course of 2023, the appointment of an independent constitutionally protected NHRI was not addressed by official quarters nor was the public informed of any developments.
- After acknowledging the absence of an NHRI in Malta, a proposal was submitted to the Prime Minister in November 2023



The Parliamentary Ombudsman with a delegation from the Ombudsman Institution of Kosovo, hosted by the Office of the Ombudsman in Malta for a study visit focusing on communications, IT and human resources

for the setting up of an NHRI (not of an Equality body) by extending the mandate of the Ombudsman, an independent and constitutionally protected institution, and ex lege an Officer of Parliament, thereby avoiding the need to create from scratch a separate institution: the infrastructure, experienced staff and established procedures of the Office were a solid foundation to build on. The strength of the Ombudsman to act also as a promotor and/or protector of human rights derived from the statutory and constitutional status of the Office, a proven and effective track record, and an independent budget and financial autonomy.

- The Office insisted on this approach firstly because the Paris Principles allow for flexibility in structure in a way that each country can tailor its NHRI to fit its legal, social and political context, and secondly because the establishment of NHRIs within

the framework of Ombudsman institutions is no experiment but a success story in a number of European countries including Cyprus, Croatia, Slovenia, Kosovo, Serbia, Albania, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Andorra, Spain, Hungary, North Macedonia, Czechia and Greece.

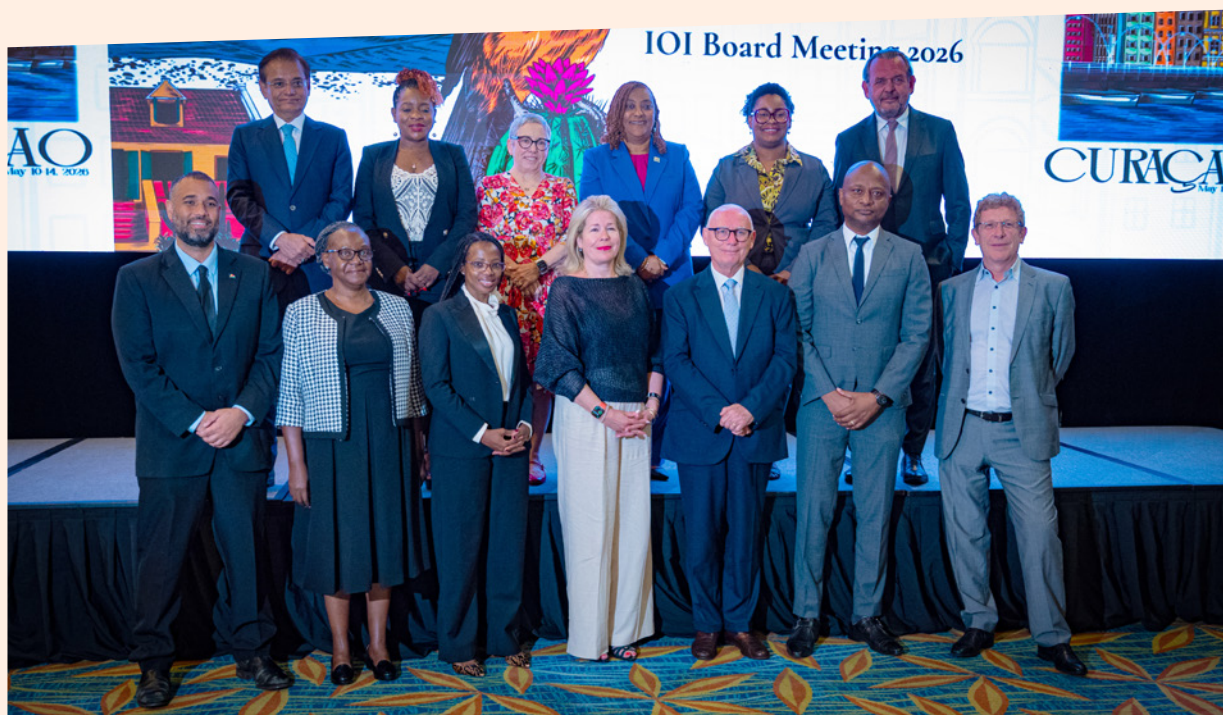
- At that point in time, the Government had not yet taken an official position on the matter.
- Early in 2024, on the basis of the Ombudsman Act 1995 itself, as it stands at present, the Office made a request to the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (“ENNHRI”) for the grant of Associate Status to the Malta Ombudsman. The request was accepted on the 23 February 2024. After being granted Associate Status, the Office sought assistance



The Parliamentary Ombudsman receiving the findings of the TransFormWork 2 Final Comparative Report from The Malta Chamber

from ENNHRI to review the Ombudsman Act 1995 to ensure full alignment of the Act with the Paris Principles.

- In April/May 2024, ENNHRI conducted a detailed review of the Act, identifying key areas for improvement. As a proactive response to these findings, the Ombudsman drafted a new fully-fledged Ombudsman Bill, with the assistance of experts, rather than resort to piecemeal amendments to the present law.
- In October 2024 the draft Bill was forwarded to ENNHRI for further review. ENNHRI commended the efforts of the Office to align fully with the Paris Principles, its resolve for an extended mandate, and noted that significant changes had been introduced to support the extension of the mandate. ENNHRI provided also additional technical advice, which the Ombudsman reviewed and adopted where appropriate.
- In November 2024 the Ombudsman forwarded to the Prime Minister for his consideration and that of the Cabinet of Ministers the draft of a New Ombudsman Bill that in substance extended the present mandate of the Ombudsman to the promotion and protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the person, paving the way for the Office to become the NHRI.
- In February 2025, the draft Bill was published in public interest on the official website of the Office of the Ombudsman.
- The Office did not receive any official feedback from the Government until the 2 March 2026 when the Ombudsman was verbally informed that the Government was in the process of completing a draft Bill for the appointment of a Human Rights and Equality Commission, as a body separate and distinct from the Ombudsman.



Group photo of the IOI World Board during a Board meeting in Curaçao



The Parliamentary Ombudsman attending the IOI World Board meeting in his capacity as an elected member of the Board

- Just before the House was dissolved on the 27 April 2026, and a general election called, the First Reading was approved of a Bill for the appointment of a National Commission for Human Rights and Equality. The contents of the Bill were not published.

5. PROTOCOL NO. 12 [CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS ("ECHR")]

Specific reference was made to this matter in the Ombudsplans 2026 (Page 16-17) 2025 (page 17-18) and 2024 (page 20-21).

This issue is still unresolved.

As has already been explained, following the last general election, the First Reading of a National Commission for Human Rights and Equality Bill (No. 3/2026) were presented before the newly constituted House of Representatives on the 30 June 2026 followed by the publication of the Bill itself.

This issue of Protocol No. 12 of the ECHR was addressed by means of proposed amendments to the European Convention Act (Chapter 319) that were included in the National Human Rights Commission and Equality Bill (No. 3/2026).

As has already been said, the Bill did not become law. Even as far as Protocol No. 12 is concerned, because of its constitutional mandate, the Office will refrain from entering any debate on the reasons or otherwise why the Bill did not become law.

Nonetheless the fact remains that amendments to Chapter 319, if need be, through a separate

Bill that amends Chapter 319 without having to be part and parcel of Bill with much wider effects perspectives, is of vital importance.

For the sake of transparency and good order, the Ombudsman will explain to the House why the matter is so important and needs to be remedied, if need be, through an *ad hoc* legislative intervention:

- Malta joined the Council of Europe in 1965 and signed the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms ("ECHR") in 1966. Malta ratified the Convention in 1967. In 1987 the ECHR was made part of the Laws of Malta by virtue of Chapter 319. The Convention became directly enforceable before the Maltese Courts on the 19 August 1987.
- Protocol No. 12 of the Convention gives further strength to the principle that all persons are equal before the law and that they have the right to equal protection. In the Protocol, this principle is reaffirmed by the collective enforcement of a general prohibition of discrimination committed by a public authority in the exercise of its discretionary power or by any other act or omission by a public authority. The Protocol opened for signature by Member States of the Council of Europe on the 4 November 2000 and became operational on the 1 April 2005.
- On the 8 December 2015 Malta signed and ratified the Protocol. On the 1 April 2016, the Protocol became effective but could not be enforced before the Courts of Malta.
- The Protocol is an important legal instrument to challenge discrimination in the conduct of public authority by extending protection beyond what the

Convention itself provides. Persons are protected from discrimination in the enjoyment of any right specifically granted under domestic law and in the enjoyment of a right inferred from a clear obligation of a public authority under domestic law. The Protocol establishes a wider defence against unequal treatment perpetrated by acts of Government. That is why the Protocol goes beyond the protection granted by Article 14 of the Convention, which is only accessory to the rights that are protected by other provisions of the Convention.

- Although in force as an international treaty since the 1st April 2016, Protocol No. 12 is not part of Maltese law, because it has not been expressly included by Act of Parliament in the Schedule of the European Convention Act (Chapter 319 of the Laws of Malta) or otherwise made part of Maltese law and consequently its provisions are not enforceable before the Courts of Malta.
- By signing and ratifying the Protocol, Malta did undertake an international obligation. Nonetheless the State has a likewise important obligation to make the Protocol part of Maltese law. Until that happens, persons claiming breaches of the Protocol have to claim their rights directly before the European Court of Human Rights (“ECtHR”) in Strasbourg incurring the time, expense, and complexity that an international petition entails. Allowing alleged breaches of the provisions of the Protocol to be heard and decided by the Courts of Malta will close an evident gap between Malta’s international obligations and domestic practice.
- Another very important reason why the Protocol should have been part of the Laws of Malta immediately following

ratification is the fact that the ECHR and its rules operate on the principle of subsidiarity, in the sense that rights should be protected and enforced first and foremost at the national level. The ECHR is built on a careful distribution of responsibilities between the authorities of Member States and the supervision procedures embodied in the Convention. The mandate of the ECtHR is not to function as the primary judicial body which decides on alleged violations to the human rights and freedoms that enjoy the protection of the Convention and its Protocols, but as a supervisory judicial body that ensures compliance by Contracting States.

- Subsidiarity is the hallmark of the Convention as it reflects the understanding that national authorities are better placed to protect and secure rights due to their proximity to the evidence and social context. National courts are closer to the facts on the ground and can provide effective remedies because they are most aware of the circumstances at home. The Convention relies on national authorities to ensure that domestic remedies are both available and effective.
- Subsidiarity is not just a matter of legal doctrine. The ECtHR has consistently expressed itself in the sense that it does not substitute its own assessment of facts and law to that of national courts, save where Convention rights are engaged. The requirement for a person to exhaust domestic remedies before proceeding to Strasbourg, enshrined in Article 35 of the Convention, gives substance to the principle of subsidiarity which ensures that States have the opportunity to decide on alleged human rights violations and give redress before a supra-national

judicial intervention occurs. Seeking redress directly from the ECtHR should be by far the exception.

- Another crucial matter is that although before Maltese Courts there is a real (not perceived) issue of justice being administered within a reasonable time, the situation before the ECtHR has its difficulties as well. The latest available data are proof of the scale of litigation presented before the ECtHR. Figures that result from the Annual Report of the Court for 2025 show that last year:
 1. 31,800 applications were allocated to the Court;
 2. 53,450 were pending before the Court, including cases coming from previous years;
 3. 7,011 judgements were given by the Court; and
 4. 31,562 were declared inadmissible.
- Although the figure of 53,450 of pending cases is high, the total is less than in

previous years: 2023 - 68,450 and 2024 - 60,350. The same trend relates to the cases decided or declared inadmissible in 2023 (31,000) and 2024 (33,942).

- Nonetheless this data reveals structural features. The Court operates with limited resources in relation to its caseload. The Court has 46 judges (one from each Contracting State in a personal capacity and not in representation of a Contracting State) with the support of 650 “jurists” who are highly specialised legal professionals who analyse incoming applications, prepare case files and legal summaries, draft decisions and judgements for consideration by the judges of the Court, conduct comparative legal research and assist in admissibility filtering and merits analysis. From a practical perspective, proceedings before the ECtHR are lengthy and complex. Applicants must navigate procedural requirements and may have to wait years for a judgement that is final and conclusive. None of this



The Parliamentary Ombudsman during the Council of Europe High Level Conference with Ombudsperson Institutions and National Human Rights Institutions, Strasbourg, March 2026



The Parliamentary Ombudsman during the Council of Europe ON Forum held at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg

diminishes the importance of the ECtHR because its role remains indispensable by providing authoritative interpretation of the Convention, by acting as a safety net where domestic systems fail, and by ensuring that uniform standards are applied across Contracting States.

- The Office - firmly and convincingly – has insisted without fail that the protection of human rights must begin at home. The Courts in Malta must be legally enabled to hear and decide cases concerning the protection of persons against discrimination embodied in Protocol No. 12. That is why the Office considers that the inclusion of Protocol No. 12 of the ECHR in Chapter 319 cannot be delayed further.

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

In 2025, the Malta Ombudsman was confirmed in the position of Secretary General and Treasurer of the Association of Ombudsmen of the Mediterranean (“AOM”), an organisation that brings together institutions that are committed to the full application of the Venice Principles in ombuds bodies and to the promotion and protection of human rights in line with the Paris Principles in the countries of the Mediterranean basin. The organisation encourages the sharing of experiences and the taking of initiatives of the different member institutions through co-operation. In 2027, the AOM will be holding its General Assembly in Tbilisi, Georgia, and the Ombudsman will be actively participating in that Assembly.

There is then the International Ombudsman Institute (“IOI”).

IOI is the only global organisation for cooperation between more than 200 independent Ombudsman institutions coming from more than 100 countries worldwide.

The IOI is organised in six Regional Chapters with its own regional board: Africa, Asia, Australasia & the Pacific, Europe, the Caribbean & Latin America, and North America.

The Malta Ombudsman is one of the seven (7) Directors of the European Regional Board of the IOI, of which he is also Vice-President.

The Malta Ombudsman is also a Director in the World Board of the IOI. The World Board has 28 Directors who represent the six Regional Chapters. The Ombudsman regularly participates and speaks on policy matters at meetings that are held by both Boards.

The European Region Board meets in person and more frequently online during the year. In 2027 the European Regional Board and the World Board will be meeting in person in Vienna. In 2026 the World Board and the other Regional Boards convened in Curacao.

The Malta Ombudsman attended in person and contributed significantly towards the positive outcome of the meetings, especially the drafting and approval of documents regarding changes to the By-Laws of IOI and the Ethics Guidelines intended for the promotion of standards for worldwide implementation.

THEMATIC LECTURES

The Office strongly believes that holding a significant and high-profile thematic lecture every year by prominent international personalities (especially from the ombuds world but not only) is extremely beneficial for the country, especially for public servants, oversight bodies, academics and the public.

The first of this series of lectures was held in 2024. The keynote speaker was the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman of the United Kingdom, Sir Rob Behrens. He addressed a very well-attended gathering at the House of Representatives on the theme “*The Parliamentary Ombudsman Experience: Reflections on the past and present. Looking to the future*”. The event was presided by the Hon. Mr. Speaker, Dr. Anglu Farrugia.

In 2025, the Public Protector of South Africa, Adv. Kholeka Gcaleka delivered a keynote lecture at the House of Representatives on the subject: “*Transparency, Fairness, Accountability: Cornerstones of Good Administration*”. This event was practically a full house and was presided by the Hon. Mr. Speaker, Dr. Anglu Farrugia.

The thematic lecture for this year will be held on the 29 October 2026. As in the previous two years, the lecture will be held in the Plenary Hall of the House of Representatives. The event will be presided by the Hon. Mr. Speaker Carmelo Abela. The theme will be “*Mental health risks and concerns: Strategic goals and best practices for prevention, treatment and care*”.

We shall be having with us three experts – outstanding on all counts:

- **The Right Honourable Baroness Clare Gerada DBE**
Lead for the NHS Primary Care Gambling Service and former Medical Director of the NHS Practitioner Health Programme
- **Professor Sir Simon Wessely GBE FRS**
One of the world's most distinguished psychiatrists and one of the most eminent medical researchers in the UK, currently the first-ever Regius Professor of Psychiatry at King's College London, and a leading figure in psychiatry, epidemiology, military health research, and mental health policy for several decades
- **Dr Adrian James**
Former President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Medical Director for Mental Health and Neurodiversity for NHS England.

This extraordinary event is being coordinated by Professor Anton Grech (Clinical Chairman of Mental Health Services Malta) and Professor Raymond Galea (Commissioner for Health at the Office of the Ombudsman).

In 2027, the Office intends to continue holding these thematic lectures.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The Office of the Ombudsman has proved to be a landmark democratic institution in this country. Its importance was acknowledged when it was granted constitutional status and protection by the legislator. The organs of the State have an interest in consolidating the good that has already been done by the Office and the initiatives that it intends to undertake in future.

The institution will continue to strive for the promotion of good governance in the provision of public services, to insist on the observance and protection of the rights of persons, and to promote further the common good.

To maintain its effectiveness, the Office will continue to invest not only in its infrastructure but also in the raising of professional standards through the effective use of advanced technology, training, promotion and education.

The operations and work of the Office of the Ombudsman and the Commissioners deserves to be further encouraged and strengthened by means of adequate funding as has been requested in the present Ombudsplan.

In conclusion, it is submitted that the Ombudsplan for 2026 merits the approval of the House of Representatives.

JUDGE JOSEPH ZAMMIT MCKEON
PARLIAMENTARY OMBUDSMAN



PERFORMANCE REVIEW

JANUARY - AUGUST 2026

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

JANUARY - AUGUST 2026

Complaints received by the Office of the Ombudsman

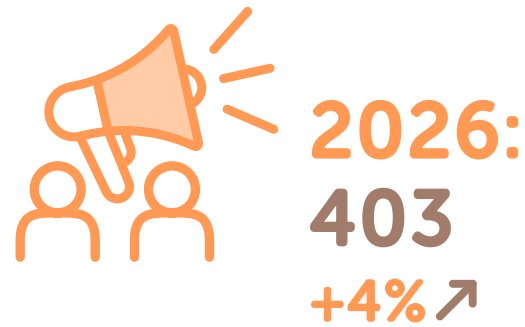
The performance review examines complaints received between January and August 2026, with comparisons drawn against the corresponding period in 2025.

During the first eight months of 2026, the Office of the Ombudsman received 403 complaints, representing a 4% increase over the same period in the previous year. This increase coincides with the Office's continued efforts to strengthen public awareness of the institution and improve access to its services.

Of the 403 complaints received, 258 were handled by the Parliamentary Ombudsman, an increase of 14% compared with 2025. The Commissioner for Environment and Planning received 52 complaints, 4% fewer than in the previous year. The Commissioner for Health dealt with 49 complaints, representing a decrease of 28%, while the Commissioner for Education received 44 complaints, an increase of 16% compared with the same period in 2025.

Total Incoming Complaints

January - August 2026



Complaints received



Ombudsman

258
+14% ↗



Commissioner
for Environment
and Planning

52
-4% ↘



Commissioner
for Health

49
-28% ↘



Commissioner
for Education

44
+16% ↗

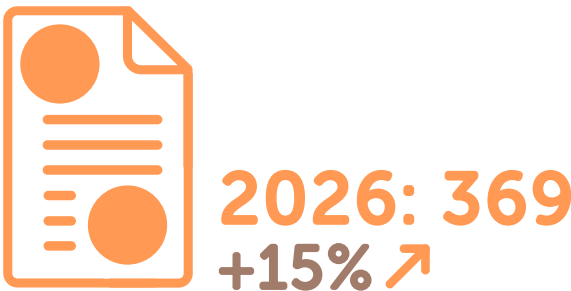
Finalised complaints by the Office of the Ombudsman

During the first eight months of 2026, the Office of the Ombudsman finalised 369 investigations, an increase of 15% compared with the same period in 2025.

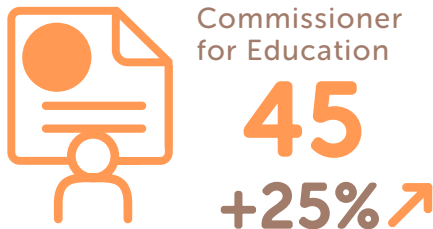
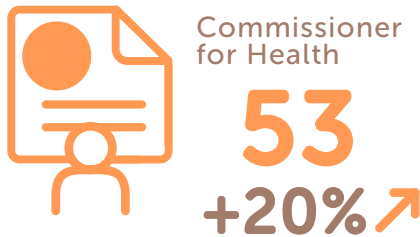
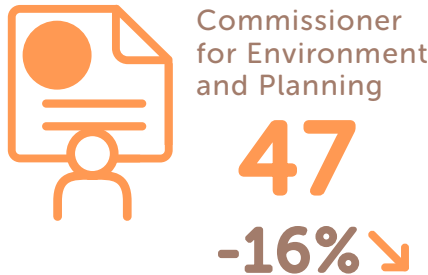
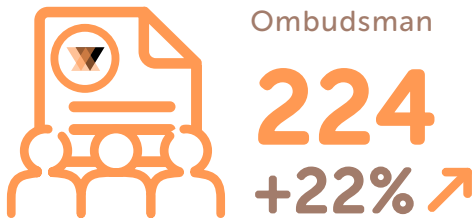
Of these, 224 investigations were concluded by the Parliamentary Ombudsman, representing a 22% increase over the previous year. The Commissioner for Environment and Planning finalised 47 cases, 16% fewer than in 2025. The Commissioner for Health concluded 53 cases, an increase of 20%, while the Commissioner for Education finalised 45 cases, 25% more than in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Total Finalised Complaints

January - August 2026



Finalised complaints



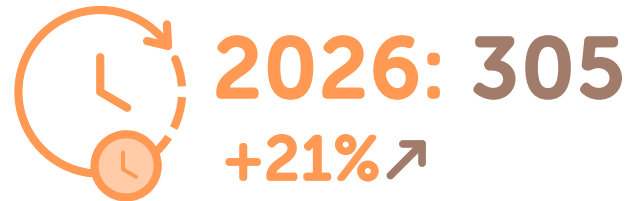
Pending case Load from previous years

As at the beginning of the year, the Office of the Ombudsman had 305 investigations pending from previous periods. This represents a 21% increase compared with the corresponding point in 2025.

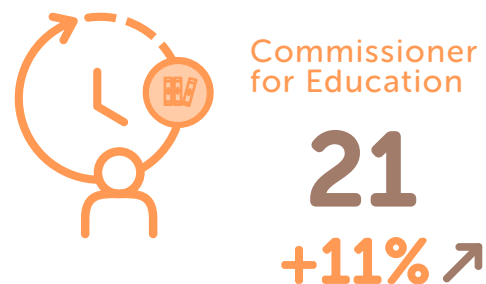
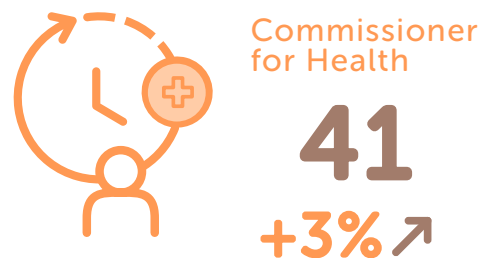
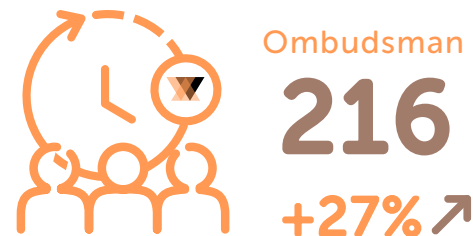
Of these pending cases, 216 were being handled by the Parliamentary Ombudsman, an increase of 27% over the previous year. The Commissioner for Environment and Planning had 27 ongoing cases, up by 8%, while the Commissioner for Health was dealing with 41 pending cases, an increase of 3%. The Commissioner for Education had 21 cases still under investigation, 11% more than in the same period in 2025.

Total pending complaints

January - August 2026



Pending by Department



Assistance to the public

January – August 2026

The Office of the Ombudsman regularly assists persons whose concerns do not ultimately lead to a formal complaint. In such cases, staff provide guidance, explain the available options and, where appropriate, direct persons to the authority or entity better placed to address the matter.

Between January and August 2026, the Office provided assistance to 684 persons, representing a 36% increase compared with the same period in 2025. This substantial rise reflects the impact of the Office's continued outreach and awareness efforts, which have strengthened its visibility and accessibility and encouraged more members of the public to seek its assistance.



Assistance given
to the public

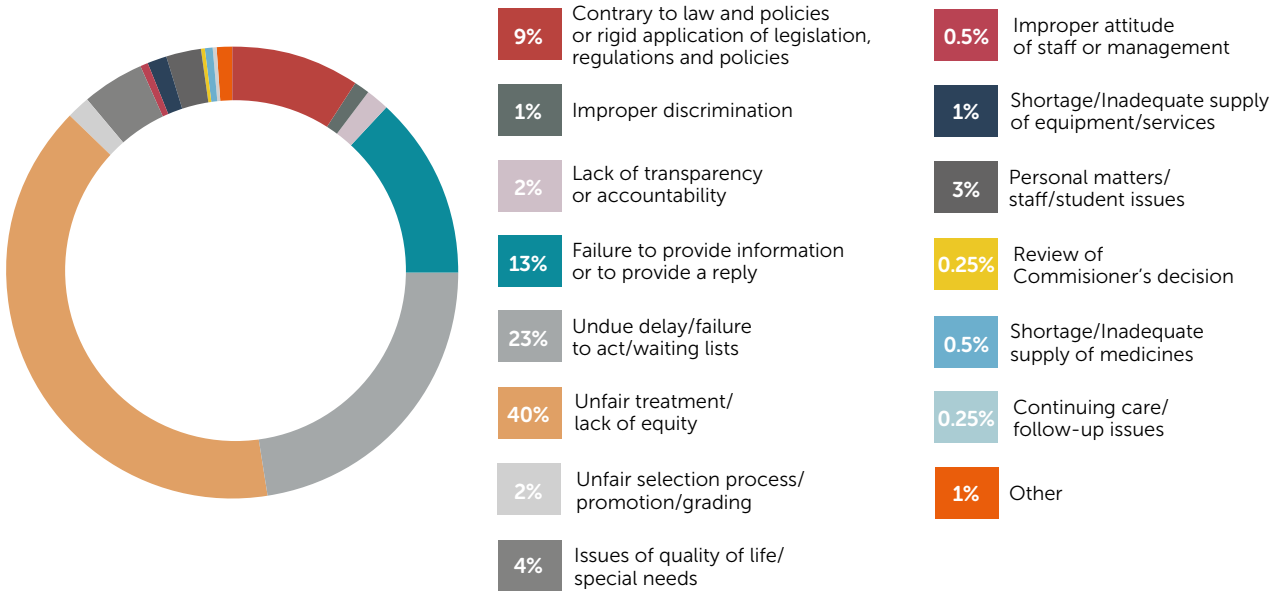
2026:
684
+36% ↗

TABLE 1.1 - COMPLAINT GROUNDS
JANUARY – AUGUST 2026

Category	Ombudsman	Commissioner for Health	Commissioner for Environment and Planning	Commissioner for Education	Total
Contrary to law and policies or rigid application of legislation, regulations and policies	21	-	17	-	38
Improper discrimination	3	-	1	-	4
Lack of transparency or accountability	5	-	2	-	7
Failure to provide information or to provide a reply	38	6	3	5	52
Undue delay/failure to act/waiting lists	57	3	25	6	91
Unfair treatment/lack of equity	111	17	4	28	160
Unfair selection process/promotion/grading	6	1	-	-	7
Issues of quality of life/special needs	15	2	-	1	18
Improper attitude of staff or management	-	2	-	-	2
Shortage/Inadequate supply of equipment/services	-	4	-	1	5
Issues of privacy, dignity and confidentiality	-	-	-	-	-
Personal matters/staff issues/student issues	-	10	-	1	11
Review of Commissioner's decision	1	-	-	-	1
Shortage/Inadequate supply of medicines	-	2	-	-	2
Continuing care/follow-up issues	-	1	-	-	1
Other	1	1	-	2	4
TOTAL	258	49	52	44	403

Table 1.1 and Pie Chart 1.2 show the breakdown of complaints according to the alleged form of maladministration. Unfair treatment or lack of equity remained the most frequently reported concern, accounting for 40% of all complaints, or 160 cases. This was followed by undue delay, failure to act and waiting list related issues, which together represented 23% of complaints, or 91 cases.

PIE CHART 1.2 - COMPLAINT GROUNDS
JANUARY – AUGUST 2026



Classification	Ombudsman	Commissioner for Health	Commissioner for Environment and Planning	Commissioner for Education	Total
Sustained	8	15	7	10	40
Not sustained	53	18	10	8	89
Resolved cases	46	8	5	15	74
Discontinued	29	11	16	11	67
Outside Jurisdiction	21	-	-	1	22
Declined	67	1	9	-	77
TOTAL	224	53	47	45	369

CASE OUTCOMES

Table 1.3 and Pie Chart 1.4 present the outcome of the 369 cases finalised by the Office of the Ombudsman during the period under review:

- 40 complaints were sustained, representing 11% of all finalised cases.
- 89 complaints were not sustained, accounting for 24%.
- 74 cases were resolved through advice or assistance without the need for a formal investigation, representing 20%.
- In 67 cases, no formal investigation was undertaken, accounting for 18%.
- 22 cases fell outside the jurisdiction of the Office and could therefore not be investigated by the Ombudsman or the Commissioners, representing 6%.
- 77 cases were declined on grounds provided for under the Ombudsman Act, accounting for 21%.

PIE CHART 1.4 - CLASSIFICATION OF FINALISED COMPLAINTS JANUARY – AUGUST 2026

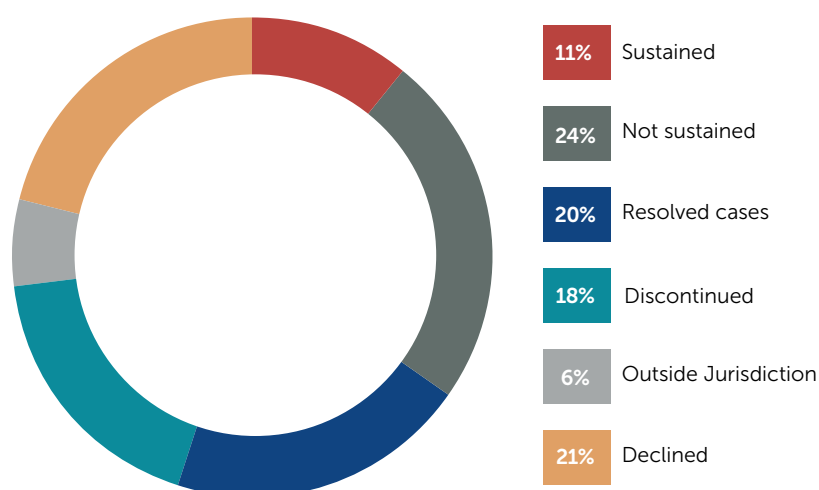


TABLE 1.5 - TYPE OF MALADMINISTRATION OF SUSTAINED AND RESOLVED COMPLAINTS

JANUARY – AUGUST 2026

Category	Ombudsman	Commissioner for Health	Commissioner for Environment and Planning	Commissioner for Education	Total
Contrary to law and policies or rigid application of legislation, regulations and policies	3	1	2	-	6
Improper discrimination	-	-	-	1	1
Lack of transparency or accountability	-	-	1	-	1
Failure to provide information or to provide a reply	11	5	1	2	19
Undue delay/failure to act/waiting lists	23	3	6	4	36
Unfair treatment/lack of equity	14	6	2	14	36
Unfair selection process/promotion/grading	1	-	-	1	2
Issues of quality of life/special needs	1	-	-	1	2
Improper attitude of staff or management	-	1	-	-	1
Shortage/Inadequate supply of equipment/services	-	3	-	1	4
Issues of privacy, dignity and confidentiality	-	-	-	-	-
Personal matters/staff issues/student issues	-	2	-	-	2
Review of Commissioner's decision	-	-	-	-	-
Shortage/Inadequate supply of medicines	-	2	-	-	2
Continuing care/follow-up issues	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1	-	-	1	2
TOTAL	54	23	12	25	114

TYPES OF MALADMINISTRATION IDENTIFIED

Table 1.5 presents the categories of maladministration identified in cases that were either sustained (40) or resolved (74) by the Ombudsman and the Commissioners.

Unfair treatment or lack of equity, together with undue delay, failure to act and waiting list related issues, remained the most prevalent forms of maladministration. Combined, these two categories accounted for 63% of all sustained and resolved cases.

CONCLUSION

The 2026 figures point to a clear pattern of growing engagement with the Office of the Ombudsman. Complaints increased by 4% when compared with the same period in 2025, while requests for assistance rose by a much stronger 36%. This sustained growth in public contact suggests that more persons are aware of the institution, understand its role and are increasingly willing to seek its guidance.

The marked increase in assistance is particularly significant. It shows that the Office is being approached not only when

a formal complaint is lodged, but also as a trusted source of guidance when persons are uncertain about where to turn. This reinforces the value of the outreach strategy pursued in recent years and points to stronger confidence in the institution as an accessible and independent point of reference.

At the same time, the profile of maladministration remains consistent. Unfair treatment or lack of equity, together with delays, failures to act and waiting list related issues, continue to account for a substantial share of the cases sustained or resolved. Their persistence indicates that, while access to the Office has improved, recurring administrative weaknesses still require attention from public bodies.

The figures therefore reflect two parallel developments. The Office is reaching more people and appears to be strengthening trust in its services, while the nature of the complaints continues to highlight areas where public administration must improve. For the Ombudsman, the challenge remains to build on this trust, maintain accessibility and use the evidence emerging from complaints to encourage fairer, more responsive and more effective administration.

COMMUNICATIONS AND RESEARCH OFFICE





The Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Education with the former Rector of the University of Malta, Prof. Alfred J. Vella, and the Rector of the University of Malta, Prof. Frank Bezzina

COMMUNICATIONS, OUTREACH AND RESEARCH

Over the past year, the Office of the Ombudsman has continued to strengthen the way it communicates with the public, public administration and its various stakeholders. The underlying objective remains to make the institution more visible, accessible and relevant, particularly to persons who may require its assistance but are not necessarily familiar with the services available to them.

Communications and outreach are an important part of the Office's wider mandate. Greater awareness of the Ombudsman's role enables more persons to seek assistance when they encounter difficulties with public administration. At the same time, sustained

engagement with public bodies helps promote a better understanding of the principles of fairness, accountability, transparency and good administration.

During 2025, a significant part of the Office's communications activity was dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Ombudsman institution in Malta. The anniversary programme provided an opportunity to reflect on three decades of service, recognise the contribution made by the institution to public life and consider the challenges that lie ahead.

The programme was built around four principles which remain central to the Office's work: protecting rights, ensuring fairness, standing for justice and fostering

good governance. These principles were reflected throughout the anniversary events, publications and communications coordinated by the Communications and Research Office in collaboration with the other sections of the institution.

AWARENESS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Office continued to place emphasis on providing clear information about its functions and services while maintaining regular dialogue with the public, stakeholders and public administration.

The objective goes beyond promoting the institution itself. Outreach seeks to ensure that persons understand when and how they may approach the Ombudsman, while also encouraging public authorities to recognise the Office as a constructive mechanism through which administrative shortcomings can be identified and addressed.

This approach will continue during 2027, with communications activity increasingly focused on accessibility, public understanding and strengthening engagement with sectors of society that may be less familiar with the Ombudsman's role.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

The media remains an important stakeholder in the work of the Office of the Ombudsman and an essential channel through which information about the institution reaches the wider public.

Throughout the year, the Ombudsman and the Commissioners continued to participate in interviews, current affairs programmes and discussions across the principal television and radio stations. These interventions provide

an opportunity to explain the work of the institution, discuss matters relating to good administration and raise awareness of issues emerging from investigations.

The Office also maintains an open and responsive relationship with journalists. Media enquiries are addressed promptly and information is provided within the limits imposed by law and the confidentiality requirements governing investigations.

Matters highlighted through media reporting may also draw the attention of the Ombudsman or the Commissioners to issues of wider public concern and, where the circumstances warrant, may lead to consideration of an own initiative investigation.

The Ombudsman also contributes articles and opinion pieces to media outlets and to the Office's website on subjects connected with the functions of the institution, good administration and human rights. These contributions allow the Ombudsman to address matters that may not always receive sustained public attention and to contribute an institutional perspective to the national discussion.

Media engagement will remain an integral part of the Office's communications activity during 2027.

ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Direct engagement with stakeholders continued throughout the year through meetings with representatives of public bodies, civil society organisations, international institutions and other organisations whose work intersects with that of the Ombudsman.



The Parliamentary Ombudsman during a meeting with the National Climate Action Council

Such meetings serve two purposes. They provide an opportunity for the Office to explain its mandate and procedures, while also allowing the Ombudsman and the Commissioners to better understand concerns emerging from different sectors of society.

The programme of meetings with ambassadors accredited to Malta also continued, particularly with representatives of countries whose nationals form sizeable communities in Malta. A consistent message during these meetings has been that access to the services of the Ombudsman is not restricted by nationality. Maltese citizens, EU nationals and third country nationals may all seek the assistance of the Office in matters that fall within its jurisdiction.

Stakeholder engagement will continue during 2027 as part of the Office's efforts to strengthen relationships with institutions and communities and to ensure that information about the services of the Ombudsman reaches as broad an audience as possible.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Office's website has developed into its principal digital information platform and an important first point of contact for persons seeking information about the Ombudsman.

The website provides information on the mandate and functions of the Ombudsman and the Commissioners, guidance on lodging a complaint, news about institutional activities, case studies arising from investigations and material relating to areas



The Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Health during an information session for elderly persons organised by the Paola Local Council

such as human rights and developments within international Ombudsman institutions.

Since the launch of the redesigned website in October 2024, it has recorded approximately 54,000 unique visitors and 357,000 page views. The significant increase in traffic demonstrates the growing importance of the digital platform as a means through which the public accesses information about the Office and its work.

The monthly electronic newsletter also continues to provide a direct means of communicating developments to stakeholders. Its distribution list has grown to more than 1,000 recipients, including Members of Parliament, local councils, senior officials within the public service, media

organisations and counterpart institutions overseas. The newsletter records an average open rate of approximately 55 per cent.

Social media complements these channels by allowing the Office to communicate developments in a more immediate and accessible format. Regular content highlights investigations, publications, activities and information that may be of interest to the public.

During 2027, greater attention will continue to be given to the quality, accessibility and relevance of digital content, ensuring that the Office's online presence supports both public awareness and access to its services.



The Parliamentary Ombudsman during an interview on Mill-Kamra



The Parliamentary Ombudsman during an information session for elderly persons organised by the Tarxien Local Council



The Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Auditor General, Mr Charles Deguara, visiting MCAST Freshers' Week

DIGITALISATION OF INTERNAL PROCESSES

During 2026, the Communications and Research Office was entrusted with coordinating the digitalisation of selected internal processes within the Office of the Ombudsman. The initiative aims to improve investigative and administrative efficiency through better use of digital tools and more streamlined workflows.

The focus is on reducing repetitive manual tasks, improving the organisation and retrieval of information, strengthening case management and enhancing the quality, consistency and speed of reporting.

This work will continue during 2027 as part of the Office's efforts to modernise its internal operations, and strengthen organisational capacity.

THEMATIC LECTURE ON MENTAL HEALTH

The annual thematic lecture has become an important component of the Office's outreach and educational programme, bringing together policymakers, public officials, professionals, academics, civil society and other stakeholders to discuss issues of national importance.

The 2026 lecture, entitled "***Mental Health Risks and Concerns: strategic goals and best practices for prevention, treatment and care***", will be held on 29 October in the Plenary Hall of the House of Representatives.

Mental health has significant implications for public policy and public administration, affecting healthcare, education, employment, families and communities. The lecture will therefore examine the subject beyond



The Parliamentary Ombudsman and the the Commissioner for Education visiting the KSU Freshers' Week at the University of Malta

awareness, considering the quality and accessibility of prevention, treatment and care and the responsibilities of public institutions towards persons experiencing mental health difficulties.

The international speakers are Baroness Professor Clare Gerada DBE, Professor Sir Simon Wessely and Dr Adrian James, bringing expertise from primary care, psychiatry, mental health policy, service provision and professional wellbeing.

The event will be presided over by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon. Carmelo Abela, and will provide a national forum for discussion on how public services and institutions can contribute to stronger prevention, treatment and care.

FRESHERS' WEEK

The Office continued its participation in Freshers' Week activities within Malta's principal post-secondary and tertiary educational institutions, including the University of Malta, MCAST, the Institute of Tourism Studies and the Institute for Education.

Participation in these activities provides direct access to students and academic staff and allows the Office to explain the functions of the Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Education in an informal and accessible setting.

Information material and publications are distributed from the Office's stands and students are encouraged to engage directly



The Commissioner for Education, Chief Justice Emeritus Vincent De Gaetano, during an interview on RTK103

with representatives of the institution about its work and the services available to them.

The Ombudsman, Judge Joseph Zammit McKeon, and the Commissioner for Education, Chief Justice Emeritus Vincent De Gaetano, also participate in these events, providing an opportunity for direct engagement with students and members of the academic community.

At MCAST, the Office will also collaborate with the National Audit Office through a joint presence aimed at highlighting the contribution made by parliamentary oversight institutions to accountability, good governance and the proper functioning of democratic institutions.

EDUCATIONAL TALKS

Engagement with younger generations also continued through the programme of educational talks delivered in secondary schools and Sixth Forms.

Originally developed in collaboration with Church schools, the programme was extended to state secondary schools during the last scholastic year. Following the positive response received, the initiative will continue during the forthcoming academic year.

The sessions are primarily directed at Year 10, Year 11 and Sixth Form students and seek to introduce young persons to the principles of good governance, civic responsibility and the role played by institutions such as the Ombudsman within a democratic system.



The Commissioner for Education, Chief Justice Emeritus Vincent De Gaetano, during one of the educational talks with secondary school students organised by the Office of the Ombudsman



The Commissioner for Health, Prof. Raymond Galea, during an interview on Campus FM



The Commissioner for Environment and Planning during an interview on Campus FM with Prof. Andrew Azzopardi

The talks are delivered by the Commissioner for Education, Chief Justice Emeritus Vincent De Gaetano. They explain the role and functions of the Ombudsman, the relationship between the public and public authorities, the investigation of complaints and the Office's relationship with Parliament.

Particular attention is given to public administration and the right to good administration. Students are encouraged to understand both their rights and responsibilities and the importance of fairness, transparency, accountability and reasoned decision making within the public sector.

The Office intends to continue developing this initiative during 2027 and to broaden its reach within the education sector.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Research remains an integral function of the Communications and Research Office. Apart from its communications responsibilities, the Office coordinates the preparation of the institution's main publications and undertakes research requested by the Ombudsman and the Commissioners.

The Office also coordinates the in house translation of publications and other material into Maltese through its Translation Coordinator, ensuring consistency and accessibility across the institution's official communications.

I. CASE NOTES

Case Notes 2025 brings together 38 selected investigations undertaken by the Ombudsman and the specialised Commissioners.



Group photo during the 30th Anniversary International Conference hosted by the Office of the Ombudsman in Malta

The publication provides practical examples of the type of complaints received by the institution, the considerations that inform investigations and the conclusions and recommendations that emerge from them. Through the publication of selected cases, the Office also seeks to contribute to a wider understanding of good administrative practice within the public sector.

The drafting, Maltese translation and proofreading process is coordinated internally with the participation of the relevant sections of the Office.

II. ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report provides Parliament and the public with a comprehensive account of the work carried out by the institution during the year.

It incorporates the reports of the specialised Commissioners, information on institutional activities and developments, and statistical analysis of complaints, investigations and caseload performance.

III. OMBUDSPLAN

The Ombudsplan is presented annually to Parliament in accordance with the Ombudsman Act. It sets out the activities and priorities envisaged for the following year, draws Parliament's attention to matters which the Ombudsman considers deserving of discussion and includes the institution's request for funding from the Consolidated Fund.

The Ombudsplan is subsequently considered during a dedicated meeting of the House Business Committee.

IV. RESEARCH AND BRIEFINGS

The Communications and Research Office also undertake research and prepares briefing material required by the Ombudsman in connection with meetings, interviews, official visits and participation in international events.

Such briefs provide relevant institutional, legal, policy and background information and support the Ombudsman in engagements with local and international stakeholders.

LOOKING AHEAD

The work undertaken during the past year reflects an approach to communications and research that is increasingly integrated with the wider objectives of the institution.

Public outreach, media engagement, education, stakeholder relations, publications and digital communications all contribute towards making the Ombudsman more accessible and better understood. Research supports the institution in developing informed positions and participating effectively in national and international discussions. Digitalisation now adds a further dimension by seeking to improve the efficiency of internal processes and support the investigative work of the Office.

During 2027, the Communications and Research Office will continue to strengthen these areas with particular emphasis on accessibility, public understanding, institutional engagement and more efficient internal working practices.

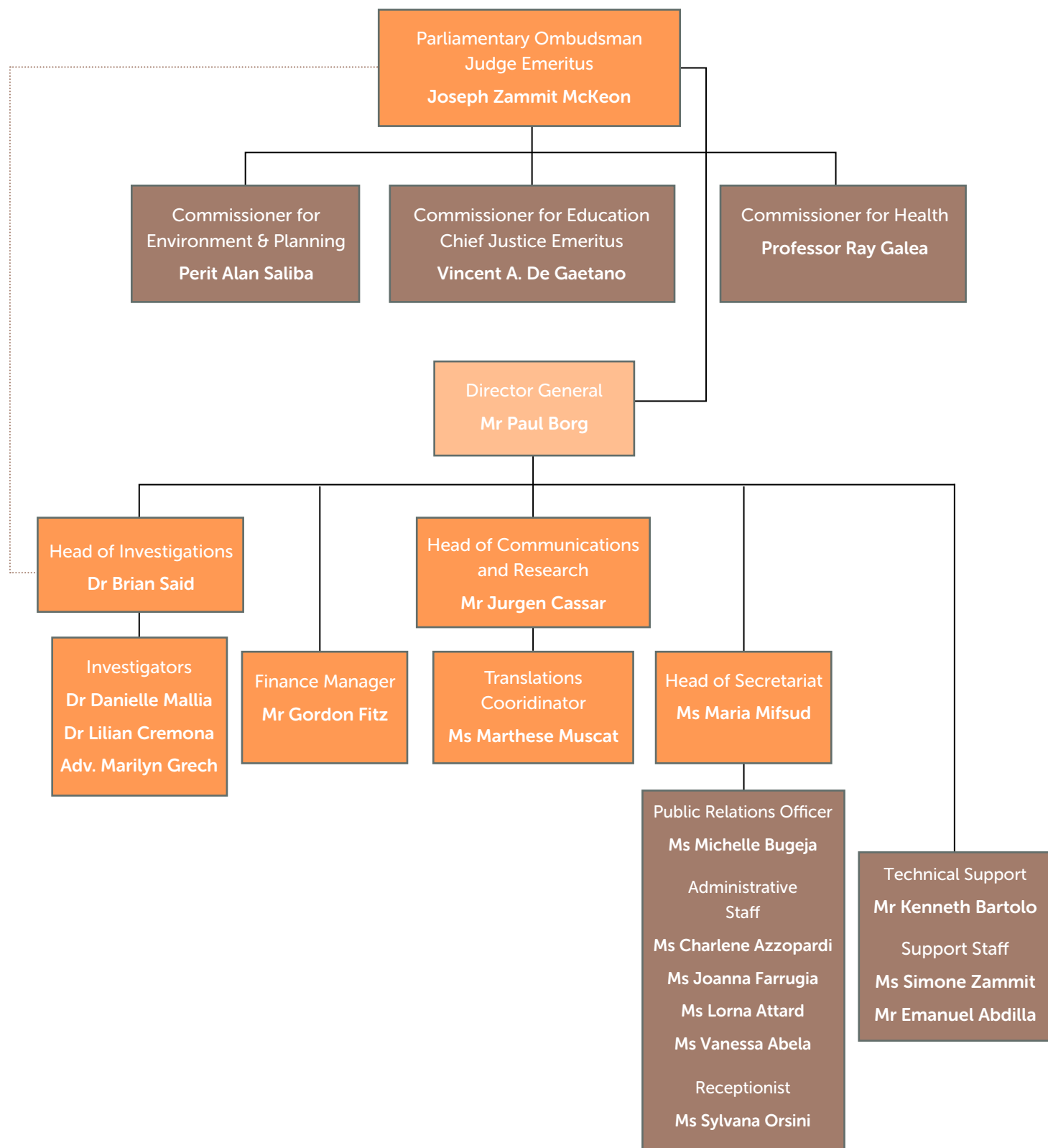
The overall objective remains to bring the institution closer to the public while strengthening its contribution to a fair, transparent and accountable public administration.



The Parliamentary Ombudsman addressing the 30th Anniversary International Conference hosted by the Office of the Ombudsman in Malta

ORGANISATION CHART

AS AT 31 AUGUST 2026



FINANCIAL COMMENTARY

2026/2027

FINANCIAL ALLOCATION FOR 2026

The financial allocation for the year 2026 amounted to €2,002,700 (Table 2.1) and was made up of the following heads of expenditure:

- i) Salaries and Personal Emoluments
€ 1,647,010
- ii) Operational and Maintenance Expenses
€ 250,190
- iii) Capital & Conference Expense
€ 105,000

The effective allocation from the Ministry of Finance at the beginning of the year 2026 amounted to €2,003,000 as per the estimates submitted for the year 2026. This allocation was recommended for approval on the 10 November 2025 at the meeting of the House Business Committee and approved by Parliament at the Plenary Session of the 23 April 2026.

CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

The extensive refurbishment and restoration works on the premises situated at 10, St Paul Street, Valletta, which were acquired by the Office on 1 May 2023, are now in their final stages and are expected to be completed by the end of September 2026.

While the original completion date had been projected for the end of 2025, the project required additional structural interventions following the discovery of further areas requiring reinforcement during the course of the works. The programme was also affected by delays in the delivery of specialised materials and the availability of contractors. These unforeseen circumstances extended the implementation period but have ensured that the building is being restored to the highest structural and conservation standards.

The refurbishment has included extensive structural reinforcement, the replacement and restoration of timber elements, the conservation of significant architectural features, and the installation of modern finishes, while preserving the character of the historic property. Wall frescoes have also been uncovered. Once completed, the integrated premises will provide the Office with additional high-quality office space that complements the existing office block and supports its expanding operational requirements.

The Office continues to invest in the modernisation of its digital infrastructure to enhance operational efficiency and improve the quality of its services.

Following the successful implementation of the upgraded IT infrastructure and the launch of the new website, attention has now shifted to the enhancement of the Office's case management system. Work is currently underway to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities into the existing case management platform with the aim of supporting case officers in the preparation and compilation of documents, facilitating information management, and streamlining administrative processes.

The introduction of these AI-assisted functionalities is expected to improve the efficiency of case handling while enabling the Office to respond more effectively to an increasingly complex and demanding caseload. This initiative forms part of the Office's broader digital transformation strategy and reflects its commitment to adopting innovative technologies that enhance productivity without compromising the quality and independence of its work.

With the availability of the additional space at the newly refurbished premises, plans for the establishment of a multi-functional boardroom have progressed significantly.

The new facility is being designed as a flexible space capable of accommodating formal meetings, training sessions, presentations, stakeholder consultations and collaborative working sessions. To ensure that the boardroom meets both present and future operational requirements, the Office has engaged a professional interior designer to prepare a contemporary design that combines functionality with a modern aesthetic.

Once completed, the boardroom will provide a professional environment for internal and external engagements and will further strengthen the Office's capacity to host meetings and other institutional activities. The project remains an important component of the Office's ongoing programme of modernisation and organisational development.

The Office remains committed to preserving and enhancing its historic premises through a continuous programme of maintenance and refurbishment.

Following the successful completion of the extensive maintenance programme on both the internal and external wooden structures of the office buildings, ongoing works continue to focus on the regular maintenance and refurbishment of all timber structures, apertures and other architectural elements. These interventions are essential to safeguard the structural integrity and heritage value of the buildings while ensuring that they remain in excellent condition.

The wider refurbishment programme also continues to improve the working environment by gradually modernising office facilities and ensuring that the Office provides functional, efficient and welcoming environment for both staff and visitors. These investments reflect the Office's long-term commitment to maintaining premises that support its growing operational needs while respecting the historic character of the buildings.

TABLE 2.1 - FINANCIAL ALLOCATION REQUEST FOR 2027

DETAILS	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Requested</i>
	<i>Allocation for 2026</i>	<i>Allocation for 2027</i>
	€	€
Salaries	985,641	931,652
Bonuses	7,020	6,221
Income supplements	6,298	5,573
Social security contributions	55,000	57,964
Allowances	593,051	526,490
<i>Total personal emoluments</i>	1,647,010	1,527,900
OPERATIONAL & MAINTENANCE EXPENSES		
Utilities	20,000	20,000
Materials and supplies	10,000	10,000
Repair and upkeep	16,000	16,000
Rent	8,200	8,200
International membership	5,300	5,800
Office services	10,000	10,000
Transport	10,000	10,000
Travel	40,000	40,000
Information services	5,000	5,000
Contractual services	70,000	130,000
Professional services	15,000	30,000
Training	10,000	10,000
Hospitality	5,000	5,000
Outreach Programmes	25,000	25,000
Incidental expenses	690	1,100
<i>Total operational and maintenance expenses</i>	250,190	326,100
SPECIAL EXPENDITURE		
Conference	-	-
Equipment	105,500	146,000
<i>Total special expenditure</i>	105,500	146,000
TOTAL	2,002,700	2,000,000



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Tel: +356 2248 3200, 2248 3216

Office opens to the public as follows:

October – May 08:30am – 12:00pm

01:30pm – 03:00pm

June – September 08:30am – 12:30pm

Website: www.ombudsman.org.mt

Facebook: Ombudsman Malta