

## **University of Malta National Forum on Constitutional and other changes to Information Law in Malta**

The Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences, University of Malta, is organising a half-day National Forum on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2022 in order to give the opportunity for a full and frank discussion of alternatives to the Bills proposing amendments to the Constitution, the Criminal Code and the Code of Organisation and Civil Procedure recently tabled by the Government in the House of Representatives.

The Government has frozen Parliamentary debate on these bills in order to permit time for consultation, after various NGOs, journalists, and academics decried the lack of a White Paper consultation process and criticised the inadequacy of the proposals. The Forum, which will be held on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October in the Aula Magna, University of Malta, Valletta, will consist of two parts: a panel from 14:30 to 16:00 where different points of view may be shared and concerns may be aired; and a drafting session from 16.30-19.00 which will be dedicated to discussing concrete proposals for wording of one or more alternative proposals to the ones published by Government. The panel will be moderated by Professor Gorg Mallia, Head of the Department of Media & Communications and the drafting session convenor is Professor Joe Cannataci, Head of the Department of Information Policy and Governance. Professor Cannataci was the first-ever UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy between 2015 and 2021 and is the Council of Europe Lead Expert on the Data Protection Treaty Art 11 that deals with exemptions from privacy safeguards including those for purposes of national security, defence, law enforcement, economic matters and the general public interest. The outcome of the Forum will be communicated to the Committee that has been entrusted by Government to carry out consultations.

This National Forum is intended to help inform the process of public consultation and not substitute it. It is expected to examine various areas of Information Law including privacy, data protection, freedom of expression, the protection of media professionals such as journalists, access to information held by the state, and related issues. It will also cover every individual's right to free, unhindered, development of personality as well as the right to family life, both of which rights have a gender dimension as well as being of special interest to vulnerable minorities including those on the LGBTQI+ spectrum. Anyone interested in any of these topics is invited to attend.

Politically-affiliated persons from all parties with an interest in the subject, including MPs and MEPs, are also welcome but should note that the main focus of the National Forum is to provide a non-adversarial setting for exchange of ideas about substantive points of law and especially to give the opportunity to those who do not have the chance to participate in parliamentary debates to air their views. The organisers have pointed out that moderators will be instructed to shut down the microphone if anybody taking the floor indulges in partisan political interventions. The organisers believe that the subject warrants a non-partisan approach and this will underpin the whole philosophy of the event. Both official languages, English and Maltese, may be used by speakers during the Forum, with no interpretation being provided.

Participation is free but registration is required by sending an email to Ms Caroline Chetcuti at [caroline.chetcuti@um.edu.mt](mailto:caroline.chetcuti@um.edu.mt) as places are limited. Registrations close on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October at 17.00. Registered participants will receive one or more alternative texts to those tabled by Government last month which will be discussed during the second part of the Forum. Anyone interested in being on the panel should send an email to [gorg.mallia@um.edu.mt](mailto:gorg.mallia@um.edu.mt). The panellists will be selected from all those who express an interest to speak by Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October at 17.00. The

number of panellists is limited in order to permit each panellist to speak for ten minutes with some time being reserved for discussion and comments from the floor. Anyone who would like to suggest alternative wording or ideas to be discussed during the Drafting Session please send them in writing by Monday 24<sup>th</sup> October at 17.00 to [jcannataci@sec.research.um.edu.mt](mailto:jcannataci@sec.research.um.edu.mt).