

## Special Audits and Investigations

The National Audit Office carries out investigations in accordance with the Auditor General and National Audit Office Act of 1997. Such investigations may be initiated at the request of the Minister of Finance or the Public Accounts Committee. In this latter case, any three members of the Committee may submit a request to the Office to initiate an investigation. Furthermore, the Auditor General may, on his own initiative, instigate investigations of matters relating to government finances, property, or funds administered under the control of any government department or office. Investigations may also focus on the accounts of public authorities or bodies administering, holding or using public funds belonging directly or indirectly to the Government of Malta. Moreover, the Auditor General may review the operations of companies or other entities in which the Government of Malta owns not less than 51 per cent of the shares. Finally, the Office is empowered to audit any other matter as may be provided by or under any law.

An integral aspect of investigations undertaken by the National Audit Office is the setting of terms of reference, which serve to address requests made as well as outline the objectives and scope of matters under review. In addressing the set terms of reference, the Unit gathers information and evidence deemed relevant, with specific attention directed towards alleged, apparent or potential breaches of the law. Investigations generally focus on allegations of fraud, waste and misuse of resources in government programmes and activities; contract and procurement fraud or impropriety; and/or conflict of interest, ethical misconduct or other wrongdoing. The law empowers the National Audit Office in the execution of its functions, particularly through access to all government records and documents, and the authority to summon witnesses.

A team of auditors who, collectively, have the professional qualifications and competencies necessary to carry out the requested investigations undertake such assignments. Auditors invariably declare any potential or real conflicts of interest and are bound by oaths of confidentiality. Audit findings are reported in an independent and objective manner and supported by documented facts. The conclusions and recommendations arrived at by the auditor are based on the compilation of these facts. Investigations undertaken are thoroughly reviewed by the Unit's management, thereby ensuring that the set objectives were addressed in a comprehensive manner and at the required level of detail.

When not carrying out investigations, the Unit undertakes so termed Special Audits, which generally address issues of concern to the National Audit Office.