



General Public Services February 2026

## National Audit Office and European Court of Auditors Hold Annual Joint Seminar: Relevance of EU Competitiveness for Malta and for Audit

### Press Release

Today, the 27 February 2026, the National Audit Office (NAO) of Malta and the European Court of Auditors (ECA) have jointly organised their Annual Seminar that focused on the theme “Relevance of EU Competitiveness for Malta and for Audit”. This Seminar brought together representatives from audit, government, academia and the private sector.

The event opened with introductory remarks by Auditor General Mr Charles Deguara and Dr George-Marius Hyzler, Member of

the European Court of Auditors. In setting the context for the seminar, they underscored the growing strategic importance of EU competitiveness for Malta, particularly following the discussions held during the 2025 EU Contact Committee meeting hosted in Malta last November. They emphasised that competitiveness is not solely an economic objective, but also a governance challenge, highlighting the critical role of audit in promoting sound public financial management, effective policy implementation and accountability in the use of public funds.

Ms Annemie Turtelboom, Member of the ECA, delivered a keynote address outlining the European policy and economic context on competitiveness. Her intervention presented the results of several ECA performance audits in the field examining the current state of play at EU level, key policy developments, and the importance of fostering innovation, resilience and sustainable growth across Member States.

A panel discussion then explored Malta's national perspective, challenges and opportunities. The discussion was moderated by Ms Maria Grazia Briffa and featured contributions from Dr Daniel Gravino (academia), Mr Godwin Mifsud, Permanent Secretary within the Ministry for the Economy, Enterprise and Strategic Projects, Mr David Fleri Soler representing The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, and Mr Mario Xuereb representing the Malta Business Bureau. The exchange addressed Malta's performance in competitiveness indicators, structural constraints facing the economy, governance risks, absorption of EU funds, and strategic priorities under Vision 2050.

The seminar also provided practical insights into how Supreme Audit Institutions across Europe have audited competitiveness-related topics. Recorded presentations from the Supreme Audit Institutions of Finland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Ireland and Poland examined audit work on public investment and industrial policy, labour market and skills, innovation and digitalisation and energy security. These presentations highlighted common governance challenges and demonstrated how audit can contribute to strengthening policy implementation and accountability.

The seminar concluded with an interactive plenary session during which participants translated the policy discussions into concrete audit considerations for Malta. Staff reflected on potential audit topics linked to competitiveness and discussed possible audited entities and programmes and key audit questions. The exchange also explored opportunities for cooperation with other Supreme Audit Institutions and the ECA in addressing cross-border or EU-wide competitiveness themes.

The seminar reaffirmed the strong professional relationship between the NAO and the ECA and underscored their shared commitment to enhancing the relevance and impact of public sector auditing in addressing strategic challenges facing Malta and the European Union.







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