



FREEDOM HOUSE

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Freedom Of The Press - Malta (2011)

Status: Free
Legal Environment: 4
Political Environment: 9
Economic Environment: 9
Total Score: 22

Malta's constitution guarantees freedoms of speech and of the press, but it also restricts these rights under a variety of circumstances. Laws against "vilification" of, or "giving offense" to, the Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion, the country's official church, led to some restrictions on journalists. Defamation is a criminal offense, and the law guarantees the right to reply for perceived victims. Malta bases its laws on the European model but is one of only three European Union (EU) members not to have a freedom of information law. Though there is a website for Malta's freedom of information act, it clearly states that the act is not yet fully implemented, so requests cannot be submitted. Malta is a safe environment for journalists, with no reported cases of threats or physical harassment in 2010.

There is an active independent media in Malta that is free to express a variety of viewpoints, with at least five daily and two weekly newspapers publishing in both Maltese and English. Political parties, private investors, and the Catholic Church all have direct investments in broadcasting and print media, and these outlets openly express partisan views. The only national television broadcaster is TVM, though the island also has access to Italian television, which many Maltese watch. Several domestic radio stations are regulated through the Broadcasting Authority. The government does not block the internet, and it is regularly accessed by 63 percent of the population.