

448. L-Onor. Ivan Bartolo jipproponi:

L-Ewwel Qari ta' Abbozz ta' Liġi msejjaħ "Att sabiex tiġi miġġielda s-solitudni u jiġi msaħħaħ il-benesseri tas-soċjetà".

19.02.2026

ABBOZZ TA' LIĠI **msejjah**

ATT sabiex tiġi miġġielda s-solitudni u jiġi msahhaħ il-benesseri tas-soċjetà.

IL-PRESIDENT, bil-parir u l-kunsens tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, imlaqqgħa f'dan il-Parlament, u bl-awtorità tal-istess, harġet b'liġi dan li ġej:-

TAQSIMA I **Preliminari**

Titolu fil-qosor u għan.

1. (1) It-titolu fil-qosor ta' dan l-Att huwa l-Att tal-2026 dwar il-Ġlieda kontra s-Solitudni u t-Tisħiħ tal-Benesseri tas-Soċjetà.

(2) L-Istat jirrikonoxxi l-obbligu pożittiv tal-Gvern li jippromwovi politika u miżuri effettivi sabiex is-solitudni tkun rikonoxxuta bħala kwistjoni ta' importanza soċjali u ta' saħħa pubblika, u li, sabiex tiġi miġġielda s-solitudni, għandu jippromwovi l-konnessjoni soċjali u l-partecipazzjoni fil-komunità.

(3) L-Istat jemmen li s-solitudni u l-iżolament soċjali qed jaffettwaw dejjem aktar u b'mod negattiv il-benesseri mentali, emozzjonali u soċjali tal-persuni.

(4) L-Istat jemmen li huwa fl-interess pubbliku li s-soċjetà Maltija tissahħaħ permezz tal-konnettività umana, sens ta' appartenenza, u inkluzjoni sħiħa, u li l-Istat għandu obbligu pożittiv li jippromwovi l-aħjar interessi tat-tfal, tal-familja, u ta' gruppi vulnerabbli.

(5) L-Istat jiddikjara t-twemmin tiegħu li l-iżolament soċjali u s-solitudni jrawmu l-faqar fis-soċjetà u, konsegwentement, il-htieġa għal qafas nazzjonali biex jiġi miġġieled l-iżolament soċjali u s-solitudni bħala prijorità nazzjonali, u b'hekk jippromwovi n-nisġa tal-konnettività umana fis-soċjetà.

Tifsir.

2. F'dan l-Att, kemm-il darba r-rabta tal-kliem ma teħtieġx xort'ohra:

“edukazzjoni dwar il-mindfulness u l-hiliet tal-hajja” tirreferi għal programmi strutturati mmirati lejn l-għarfien emozzjonali, ir-reziljenza, il-ħsieb kritiku u l-benesseri;

“gruppi f'minoranza” jinkludu, iżda mhumiex limitati għal, gruppi etniċi, kulturali, lingwistiċi, relatati ma' diżabilità, jew gruppi ohra soċjalment emarġinati;

“gwardjan” jinkludi ġenituri, ġenituri foster, u dawk li jagħtu kura maħtura legalment;

“iżolament soċjali” tfisser in-nuqqas oġġettiv ta' kuntatt, partecipazzjoni jew integrazzjoni soċjali;

“kura residenzjali” tirreferi għal tfal li jgħixu fi djar jew istituzzjonijiet;

“tifel” jew “tifla” tfisser kull persuna taħt l-età ta' tmintax (18)-il sena;

“solitudni” tfisser l-esperjenza soġġettiva ta’ iżolament soċjali jew in-nuqqas ta’ konnessjoni umana sinifikanti.

TAQSIMA II

Strategija Nazzjonali dwar is-Solitudni u l-Konnessjoni Soċjali

Strategija Nazzjonali dwar is-Solitudni u l-Konnessjoni Soċjali.

3. (1) Il-Ministru responsabbli mill-politika soċjali għandu, fi żmien sitt (6) xhur mid-dhul fis-sehh ta’ dan l-Att, iqieghed fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra Strategija Nazzjonali dwar is-Solitudni u l-Konnessjoni Soċjali.

(2) L-Istrategija għandha tiġi riveduta u aġġornata f’intervalli li ma jaqbzux il-ħames (5) snin.

(3) L-Istrategija għandha tinkludi:

(a) objettivi u indikaturi li jistgħu jitkejlu relatati mas-solitudni u l-iżolament soċjali f’etajiet u kategoriji soċjali differenti;

(b) mekkaniżmi ta’ koordinazzjoni bejn il-Ministeri responsabbli mill-politika soċjali, is-saħħa, l-edukazzjoni, il-familja, l-ugwaljanza, l-akkomodazzjoni, u l-gvern lokali;

(ċ) skedi ta’ żmien għall-implimentazzjoni u awtoritajiet responsabbli nominati;

(d) mekkaniżmi ta’ monitoraġġ u evalwazzjoni.

(4) Il-Ministru għandu, mhux aktar tard minn tnax (12)-il xahar wara l-pubblikazzjoni tal-Istrategija u kull sena minn dakinhar ’il quddiem, iqieghed quddiem il-Kamra tad-Deputati Rapport Annwali tal-Implimentazzjoni li jindika l-progress milħuq, l-isfidi li nqalgħu, u l-miżuri korrettivi proposti.

(5) Fejn ir-Rapport Annwali tal-Implimentazzjoni ma jitqeghidx fiż-żmien preskritt, il-kwistjoni għandha tiġi riferuta awtomatikament lill-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Soċjali fi żmien gimgha mill-iskadenza tal-perjodu msemmi fis-subartikolu preċedenti.

Konsiderazzjonijiet dwar l-Impatt fuq il-Konnessjoni Soċjali.

4. (1) Fit-tfassil ta’ politika ewlenija, strategiji, jew proġetti ffinanzjati pubblikament, id-dipartimenti tal-Gvern u l-awtoritajiet pubbliċi huma fid-dmir li jqisu l-impatt potenzjali ta’ tali miżuri fuq il-konnessjoni soċjali, l-iżolament soċjali, u s-solitudni.

(2) Għall-għanijiet tas-subartikolu (1), l-awtorità responsabbli għandha tinkludi fid-dokumentazzjoni tal-politika jew tal-proġett rilevanti Stqarrija dwar l-Impatt fuq il-Konnessjoni Soċjali li tiddekrivi jekk u kif il-miżura hija mistennija li:

(a) tippromwovi l-interazzjoni soċjali u l-partecipazzjoni fil-komunità; jew

(b) turriskja li żżid l-iżolament jew l-esklużjoni soċjali.

(3) Il-forma u l-ambitu ta' tali stqarrijiet għandhom jiġu ddeterminati minn linji gwida maħruġa mill-Ministru responsabbli mill-politika soċjali fi żmien sitt (6) xhur mid-dhul fis-seħħ ta' dan l-Att.

Stqarrijiet dwar l-Impatt fuq il-Konnessjoni Soċjali.

5. (1) Kwalunkwe Ministeru jew awtorità pubblika responsabbli għall-iżvilupp ta' politika pubblika b'impatt notevoli, programm jew proġett pubbliku ewlieni għandu jipprepara Stqarrija dwar l-Impatt fuq il-Konnessjoni Soċjali fil-bidu ta' tali politika, programm jew proġett.

(2) Stqarrija dwar l-Impatt fuq il-Konnessjoni Soċjali għandha tivvaluta l-effetti probabbli tal-miżura proposta fuq is-solitudni, l-iżolament soċjali u l-opportunitajiet għal konnessjoni soċjali.

(3) Il-Ministru jista', wara konsultazzjoni mal-partijiet ikkonċernati rilevanti, joħroġ linji gwida li jispeċifikaw il-kategoriji ta' politiki jew proġetti li għalihom japplika dan l-artikolu u l-forma u l-kontenut ta' tali stqarrijiet.

6. (1) L-Istat jirrikonoxxi l-kura bbażata fuq il-familja bhala l-ambjent preferut għat-trobbija tat-tfal, hlief fejn dan ikun kuntrarju għall-aħjar interessi tat-tfal.

(2) L-awtoritajiet li għalihom il-Gvern huwa responsabbli għandhom jaħdmu b'mod attiv biex jiżguraw li tfal f'kura residenzjali jitqieghdu ma' familji, inklużi arrangamenti ta' fostering jew familji appoġġjati, soġġett għal valutazzjoni professjonali.

(3) Kwalunkwe eċċezzjoni għandha tkun akkumpanjata minn ġustifikazzjoni dokumentata, iċċentrata fuq it-tifel jew tifla, u għandha tkun soġġetta għal reviżjoni perijodika.

(4) Mekkanizmu ta' reviżjoni indipendenti għandu jimmonitorja t-tqeghid u r-riżultati, b'rapport annwali pprezentat lill-Parlament.

Il-benesseri diġitali u r-responsabbiltà korporattiva.

7. (1) Il-Ministru responsabbli mill-edukazzjoni għandu jiżgura l-introduzzjoni ta' programmi edukattivi nazzjonali xierqa għall-età fl-oqsma li ġejjin: mindfulness, hsieb kritiku, hilet tal-hajja, litteriżmu emozzjonali, stima personali (self-worth), u kura personali (self-care).

(2) Dawn il-programmi għandhom ikunu integrati f'suġġetti eżistenti bhall-Iżvilupp Personali u Soċjali tal-Karriera (PSCD), mogħtija bl-appoġġ ta' edukaturi mharrġa, counsellors, u professjonisti tas-saħħa mentali, u għandhom ikunu mhux stigmatizzanti, inklużivi, u kulturalment sensitivi.

(3) Id-"Dritt għal Skonnettjar" għall-Minuri: L-Istat għandu jordna l-implimentazzjoni ta' Postazzjoni Default ta' Privatezza u ta' Restrizzjoni (Friction Setting) għall-utenti kollha tal-midja soċjali li għandhom inqas minn sittax (16)-il sena. Dan jinkludi l-projbizzjoni tal-karatteristiċi ta' "Infinite Scroll" u "Auto-play" bejn l-22:00 u s-07:00.

(4) Trasparenza Algoritmitika: Il-pjattaformi tal-Intelligenza Artifiċjali (IA) li joperaw f'Malta għandhom jipprezentaw awdiżjar annwali lill-Kunsill Konsultattiv Nazzjonali li jipprova li l-algoritmi

tagħhom ma jagħtux prijorità lil kontenut ta' "eċitament qawwi jew involviment negattiv" (high-arousal/negative-engagement) mal-minuri, liema kontenut iwassal għal iżolament soċjali.

(5) L-Età Minima għall-Midja Soċjali: L-ebda tifel jew tifla taħt l-età ta' tlettax (13)-il sena ma jista' jkollhom kont li mhuwiex operat taħt is-superviżjoni tal-ġenituri. Bejn it-tlettax (13) u s-sittax (16)-il sena, huwa meħtieġ "Kunsens tal-Ġenituri Verifikat", sostnut minn penali horox għal dawk il-pjattaformi li jonqsu milli japplikaw il-verifika tal-età.

Hiliet ta' komunikazzjoni, smiġh u soċjali fl-iskejjel.

8. (1) L-iskejjel kollha għandhom jippromwovu l-arti tad-djalogu li jsir b'rispett, hiliet ta' smiġh attiv, empatija, u djalogu ċivili bejn membri differenti tas-soċjetà.

(2) Għal dan il-ghan, l-Istat għandu jipprovdi riżorsi adegwati għal guidance teachers, counsellors, psikologi edukattivi, u esperti esterni fejn meħtieġ.

Hin mal-familja u miżuri ta' appoġġ għall-ġenituri.

9. (1) L-Istat jirrikonoxxi l-importanza ta' hin ta' kwalità bejn it-tfal u l-ġenituri/gwardjani bħala essenzjali għall-benesseri mentali.

(2) Il-politika tal-Gvern għandha tippromwovi kemm il-kwalità kif ukoll il-kwantità ta' hin bejn it-tfal u l-ġenituri/gwardjani, u tiskoraġġixxi l-istrutturar eċċessiv tal-hin tat-tfal fejn dan idgħajjed l-interazzjoni tal-familja.

(3) Għandhom isiru kampanji ta' għarfien pubbliku biex jedukaw lill-ġenituri/gwardjani dwar involviment bilanċjat f'attivitajiet ekstrakurrikulari u biex jippromwovu r-rabta u l-preżenza tal-familja.

(4) Il-korp jew l-uffiċjal nominat taħt dan l-artikolu għandu jimmonitorja l-implimentazzjoni ta' dan l-Att u l-Istrateġija u jista' johroġ rakkomandazzjonijiet bil-miktub lill-Ministru u lill-awtoritajiet pubbliċi rilevanti.

(5) Il-Ministru jew l-awtorità pubblika li lilha tkun indirizzata rakkomandazzjoni għandhom, fi żmien disgħin (90) jum, jippubblikaw twegiba li tindika jekk ir-rakkomandazzjoni hijiex aċċettata u, fejn ma tkunx aċċettata, ir-raġunijiet għal tali deċiżjoni.

Miżuri kontra l-bullying u ambjenti soċjali siguri.

10. (1) Il-Ministru responsabbli għall-politika soċjali għandu jsaħħaħ il-qafas nazzjonali kontra l-bullying fl-iskejjel, fl-ambjenti online, u fi spazji taż-zgħażaġh u tal-komunità.

(2) Konsegwentement l-Istat għandu jadotta miżuri effettivi u preventivi biex jiġġieled u jikkastiga b'mod strett abbużi fuq il-midja soċjali, partikolarment dawk imwettqa permezz tal-użu tal-intelligenza artifiċjali, bħal deepfakes, applikazzjonijiet 'nudify', chatbots ta' grooming tal-AI, klonazzjoni tal-vuċi għal estorsjoni finanzjarja, algoritmi 'rabbit holes' li jwasslu lit-tfal għal awto-

ħsara, 'doxing' awtomatizzat, u kontenut iġġenerat mill-AI intenzjonat għal sabutaġġ soċjali, fost oħrajn. Barra minn hekk, l-Istat għandu jadotta politika li tfal taht ċertu età, li għandha tiġi stabbilita bil-liġi wara konsultazzjoni ma' esperti fil-qasam, m'għandhomx ikollhom aċċess għall-midja soċjali.

(3) Vittmi ta' bullying għandu jkollhom aċċess għal mekkaniżmi ta' rappurtar kunfidenzjali u servizzi ta' appoġġ psikoloġiku u soċjali.

Diskors ta' mibegħda, diskriminazzjoni u esklużjoni soċjali.

11. (1) L-awtoritajiet pubbliċi għandhom jaħdmu b' mod attiv biex jipprevjenu diskors ta' mibegħda, imġiba, u narrattivi soċjali li jrawmu l-esklużjoni u s-solitudni.

(2) Inizjattivi mmirati għandhom jiġu żviluppati, f'konsultazzjoni ma' gruppi f'minoranza, biex jippromwovu l-inkluzjoni, isahħu l-partecipazzjoni fil-komunità, u jnaqqsu l-iżolament.

L-arti kreattiva bħala għodda għall-konnessjoni u l-integrazzjoni.

12. (1) L-espressjoni kreattiva għandha tkun rikonoxxuta bħala mezz ta' skoperta personali, għodda għall-benesseri mentali, u mezz għall-integrazzjoni soċjali.

(2) L-Istat għandu jappoġġja miżuri ta' appoġġ komunitarju bħal programmi bbażati fuq l-arti fl-iskejjel, komunitajiet, u ambjenti ta' kura, u sħubijiet ma' organizzazzjonijiet kulturali u volontarji.

Governanza, monitoraġġ u responsabbiltà.

13. (1) Il-Ministeru responsabbli għall-politika soċjali għandu, fi żmien sitt (6) xhur mid-data tad-dhul fis-seħħ ta' dan l-Att, jistabbilixxi Kunsill Konsultattiv Nazzjonali dwar is-Solitudni u l-Konnessjoni Soċjali, magħmul minn tliet (3) rappreżentanti minn kull wiehed minn dawn li ġejjin: professjonisti tas-saħħa mentali, edukaturi, social workers, rappreżentanti tas-soċjetà ċivili, u persuni b'esperjenza diretta ta' solitudni.

(2) Il-Ministru responsabbli għall-politika soċjali, bħala rapporteur, għandu jkollu l-obbligu li jpoġġi fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra Rapport Annwali ppreparat mill-Kunsill Konsultattiv Nazzjonali dwar is-Solitudni u l-Konnessjoni Soċjali, li dwaru l-Kamra għandha immedjatament wara żżomm dibattitu mingħajr vot biex tevalwa l-progress, l-isfidi u r-rakkomandazzjonijiet. Tali dibattitu għandu jinżamm mhux aktar tard minn xahar minn meta r-Rapport Annwali jiġi ppubblikat.

Setgħat ta' monitoraġġ u twegibiet mandatorji.

14. (1) Il-Kunsill Konsultattiv Nazzjonali dwar is-Solitudni u l-Konnessjoni Soċjali għandu jimmonitorja l-implimentazzjoni ta' dan l-Att u tal-Istrategija.

(2) Il-Kunsill jista' johroġ rakkomandazzjonijiet bil-miktub lill-Ministru responsabbli mill-politika soċjali u lil kull awtorità pubblika rilevanti.

(3) Kwalunkwe Ministru jew awtorità pubblika li lilha tkun indirizzata rakkomandazzjoni għandhom, fi żmien disghin (90) jum, jippubblikaw twegiba li tindika jekk ir-rakkomandazzjoni hijiex aċċettata u, fejn ma tkunx aċċettata, ir-raġunijiet għal tali deċiżjoni.

Finanzjament u implimentazzjoni.

15. (1) Għandha tkun ir-responsabbiltà tal-Ministru responsabbli għall-politika soċjali li l-implimentazzjoni ta' dan l-Att tkun appoġġjata minn rizorsi finanzjarji ddedikati.

(2) Mingħajr preġudizzju għal kull liġi oħra, mhux inqas minn żero punt hamsa fil-mija (0.5%) tal-baġit annwali allokat għall-programmi ta' politika soċjali għandu jiġi ddedikat għal miżuri relatati direttament mal-implimentazzjoni ta' dan l-Att u tal-Istrateġija.

(3) Fl-allokkazzjoni ta' fondi taht din il-klawsola għandha tinghata prijorità:

(a) lit-tishih tas-servizzi eżistenti;

(b) lill-kollaborazzjoni bejn l-awtoritajiet pubbliċi, il-kunsilli lokali u l-organizzazzjonijiet volontarji; u

(ċ) lil miżuri murija li huma effettivi fit-tnaqqis tas-solitudni u l-iżolament soċjali.

TAQSIMA III

Emendi għall-Att dwar l-Organizzazzjonijiet Volontarji

Emendi għall-Att dwar l-Organizzazzjonijiet Volontarji.
Kap. 492.

16. Din it-Taqsima temenda l-Att dwar l-Organizzazzjonijiet Volontarji u għandha tinqara u tintfiehem haġa waħda mal-Att dwar l-Organizzazzjonijiet Volontarji, hawn iżjed 'il quddiem f'din it-Taqsima msejjaħ l-"Att prinċipali".

Emenda tal-artikolu 5 tal-Att prinċipali.

17. Fl-artikolu 5 tal-Att prinċipali minnufih wara l-kliem "Organizzazzjonijiet Volontarji" għandhom jiġu miżjuda l-kliem " , il-benesseri u l-għieda kontra s-solitudni".

Emenda tal-artikolu 7 tal-Att prinċipali.

18. L-artikolu 7 tal-Att prinċipali għandu jiġi emendat kif ġej:

(a) fil-paragrafu (m) tas-subartikolu (1) tiegħu l-kliem "taht kull liġi oħra." għandhom jiġu sostitwiti bil-kliem "taht kull liġi oħra;" u minnufih wara għandhom jiġi miżjuda l-paragrafi ġodda li ġejjin:

“(n) li jara u jiżgura li kull politika tal-gvern fil-qasam tat-trasport, l-akkomodazzjoni u s-saħha titkejjel skont l-impatt tagħha fuq l-esklużjoni soċjali u s-solitudni qabel l-implimentazzjoni;

(o) li jiżgura li tiġi żviluppata Strategija Nazzjonali għall-konnettività fis-soċjetà, liema Strategija għandha tiġi aġġornata kull tliet (3) snin. Din l-Istrategija għandha, fost affarijiet oħra, tidentifika, timmonitorja u tnaqqas il-prevalenza tas-solitudni f'Malta billi tagħmel l-aħjar użu mir-riżorsi tal-organizzazzjonijiet volontarji fil-pajjiż;

(p) li jiżgura li jaġixxi bħala l-punt primarju ta' koordinazzjoni bejn il-Ministeru għas-Saħha, il-Ministeru għall-Politika Soċjali, u l-Ministeru għall-Edukazzjoni biex jiġu sodisfatti l-obbligi leġislattivi kontra s-solitudni u l-esklużjoni soċjali, b'mod partikolari dawk taħt l-Att tal-2026 dwar il-Ġlieda kontra s-Solitudni u t-Tiżhijiet tal-Benesseri tas-Soċjetà;

(q) li jamministra l-fond magħruf bħala l-“Fond għall-Konnessjoni Soċjali” maħsub għal dawk l-organizzazzjonijiet volontarji li joħolqu third places bħal hubs komunitarji, klabbs, u programmi intergenerazzjonali, bl-involviment tal-Kunsill Malti għas-Settur Volontarju;

(r) li jiżgura li leħnu jinstema' fuq kull żvilupp urban biex jiġi żgurat li l-ispażji pubbliċi jrawmu u jsaħħu l-kuntatt u l-interazzjoni soċjali;

(s) li jiżgura li l-Kunsilli Lokali jaqsmu u jikkoordinaw miegħu b'mod effettiv dwar inizjattivi biex tiġi miġġielda s-solitudni fil-lokalitajiet tagħhom.”;

(b) minnufih wara s-subartikolu (5) tiegħu għandu jiġi miżjud is-subartikolu ġdid li ġej:

“(6) Il-Kummissarju għandu jistabbilixxi Kunsill Konsultattiv fl-Uffiċċju tiegħu magħmul minn numru ugwali ta' esperti tas-saħha mentali, is-soċjetà ċivili, u ċittadini b'esperjenza diretta ta' solitudni, u numru ugwali ta' rappreżentanti mill-Gvern u mill-Oppożizzjoni.

(a) Dan il-Kunsill Konsultattiv għandu jkollu d-dmir li jagħmel rakkomandazzjonijiet lill-Kummissarju f'rapport annwali dwar l-istat tas-solitudni fil-pajjiż, li għandu jitqiegħed fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra mill-Ministru responsabbli għall-politika soċjali minnufih.

(b) Dan ir-Rapport Annwali dwar l-istat tas-solitudni fil-pajjiż għandu jkun is-suġġett ta' dibattitu mingħajr vot fil-Kamra tad-Deputati fi żmien xahar minn meta jkun tqiegħed fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra.”.

Għanijiet u Raġunijiet

L-għanijiet u r-raġunijiet ta' dan l-Abbozz huma li filwaqt li s-solitudni tkun rikonossuta bħala kwistjoni ta' importanza soċjali u ta' saħħa pubblika, l-Istat jirrikonoxxi l-obbligu pożittiv tal-Gvern li javvanza politika biex jiġġieled is-solitudni u jsaħħaħ il-konnessjoni soċjali u l-partecipazzjoni fil-komunità. L-Uffiċċju tal-Kummissarju għall-Organizzazzjonijiet Volontarji qed jiġi msahhaħ b'mod sinifikanti, billi jkollu d-dmir li jkun holqa ewlenija għal dan il-ghan, għall-benesseri shih tas-soċjetà Maltija, bħala pilastru ewlieni tal-bini tal-futur ta' pajjiżna.

**A BILL
entitled**

AN ACT to combat loneliness and to strengthen the well-being of society.

BE IT ENACTED by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the House of Representatives, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:-

**PART I
Preliminary**

Short title and scope.

1. (1) The short title of this Act is the Combating of Loneliness and the Strengthening of the Well-being of Society Act, 2026.

(2) The State recognizes the positive obligation of the Government to promote effective policies and measures so that loneliness is recognized as a matter of social and public health importance, and that, in order to combat loneliness, it must promote social connection and community participation.

(3) The State believes that loneliness and social isolation are increasingly and adversely affecting the mental, emotional, and social well-being of persons.

(4) The State believes it is in the public interest for Maltese society to be strengthened through human connectivity, a sense of belonging, and full inclusion, and that the State has a positive obligation to promote the best interests of children, the family, and vulnerable groups.

(5) The State declares its belief that social isolation and loneliness foster poverty in society and, consequently, the need for a national framework to combat social isolation and loneliness as a national priority, thereby promoting the web of human connectivity in society.

Interpretation.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:

“child” means any person under the age of eighteen (18) years;

“guardian” includes parents, foster parents, and legally appointed carers;

“loneliness” means the subjective experience of social isolation or the lack of meaningful human connection;

“mindfulness and life skills education” refers to structured programs aimed at emotional awareness, resilience, critical thinking, and well-being;

“minority groups” include, but are not limited to, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, disability-related, or other socially marginalized groups;

“residential care” refers to children living in homes or institutions;

“social isolation” means the objective lack of social contact, participation or integration.

PART II

National Strategy on Loneliness and Social Connection

National Strategy on Loneliness and Social Connection.

3. (1) The Minister responsible for social policy shall, within six (6) months from the entry into force of this Act, lay on the Table of the House a National Strategy on Loneliness and Social Connection.

(2) The Strategy shall be reviewed and updated at intervals not exceeding five (5) years.

(3) The strategy shall include:

(a) measurable objectives and indicators relating to loneliness and social isolation across different age groups and social categories;

(b) coordination mechanisms between the Ministries responsible for social policy, health, education, family, equality, housing, and local government;

(c) implementation timelines and designated responsible authorities;

(d) monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

(4) The Minister shall, not later than twelve (12) months after the publication of the Strategy and annually thereafter, lay before the House of Representatives an Annual Implementation Report indicating progress achieved, challenges encountered, and corrective measures proposed.

(5) Where the Annual Implementation Report is not laid within the time prescribed, the matter shall be referred automatically to the Parliamentary Social Affairs Committee within one week from the lapse of the time period mentioned in the previous sub-article.

Social Connection Impact Considerations.

4. (1) In the formulation of major public policies, strategies, or publicly funded projects, Government departments and public authorities are duty bound to take into account the potential impact of such measures on social connection, social isolation, and loneliness.

(2) For the purposes of sub-article (1), the responsible authority shall include within the relevant policy or project documentation a Social Connection Impact Statement outlining whether and how the measure is expected to:

(a) promote social interaction and community participation; or

(b) risk increasing social isolation or exclusion.

(3) The form and scope of such statements shall be determined by guidelines issued by the Minister responsible for social policy within six (6) months from entry into force of this Act.

Social Connection Impact Statements.

5. (1) Any Ministry or public authority responsible for the development of a significant public policy, programme or major public project shall prepare a Social Connection Impact Statement at the outset of such policy, programme or project.

(2) A Social Connection Impact Statement shall assess the likely effects of the proposed measure on loneliness, social isolation and opportunities for social connection.

(3) The Minister may, after consultation with relevant stakeholders, issue guidelines specifying the categories of policies or projects to which this article applies and the form and content of such statements.

6. (1) The State recognizes family-based care as the preferred environment for the upbringing of children, except where this is contrary to the best interests of the child.

(2) The authorities for which the Government is responsible shall work actively to ensure that children in residential care are placed with families, including foster arrangements or supported families, subject to professional assessment.

(3) Any exception shall be accompanied by a documented justification, centered on the child, and shall be subject to periodic review.

(4) An independent review mechanism shall monitor placements and results, with an annual report submitted to Parliament.

The digital well-being and corporate accountability.

7. (1) The Minister responsible for education shall ensure the introduction of age-appropriate national educational programs in the following areas: mindfulness, critical thinking, life skills, emotional literacy, self-worth, and self-care.

(2) These programs shall be integrated into existing subjects such as Personal and Social Career Development (PSCD), delivered with the support of trained educators, counsellors, and mental health professionals, and shall be non-stigmatizing, inclusive, and culturally sensitive.

(3) The “Right to Disconnect” for Minors: The State shall mandate a Default Policy and Friction Setting for all social media users under 16 years of age. This includes the prohibition of “Infinite Scroll” and “Auto-play” features between 22:00 and 07:00.

(4) Algorithmic Transparency: AI platforms operating in Malta must provide an annual audit to the National Advisory Council proving their algorithms do not prioritise “high-arousal/negative-engagement” content to minors, which fuels social withdrawal.

(5) Social Media Minimum Age: No child under the age of 13 shall have an un-parented account. Between 13-16, “Verified Parental Consent” is required, backed by stiff penalties for platforms that bypass age-verification.

Communication, listening and social skills in schools.

8. (1) All schools shall promote the art of respectful conversation, active listening skills, empathy, and dialogue between different members of society.

(2) To this end, the State shall provide adequate resources for guidance teachers, counselors, educational psychologists, and external experts where necessary.

Family time and parental support measures.

9. (1) The State recognizes the importance of meaningful time between children and parents/guardians as essential for mental well-being.

(2) Government policy shall promote both the quality and quantity of time between children and parents/guardians, discouraging excessive structuring of children’s time where this undermines family interaction.

(3) Public awareness campaigns shall be conducted to educate parents/guardians on balanced involvement in extracurricular activities and to promote family bonding and presence.

(4) The body or officer designated under this article shall monitor the implementation of this Act and the Strategy and may issue written recommendations to the Minister and to relevant public authorities.

(5) The Minister or public authority to whom a recommendation is addressed shall, within ninety (90) days, publish a response indicating whether the recommendation is accepted and, where it is not accepted, the reasons for such decision.

Anti-bullying measures and safe social environments.

10. (1) The Minister responsible for social policy shall strengthen the national anti-bullying framework in schools, online environments, and youth and community spaces.

(2) Consequently the State shall adopt effective and preventive measures to combat and strictly punish abuses on social media, particularly those committed through the use of artificial intelligence, such as deepfakes, nudify apps, AI grooming chatbots, voice cloning for financial extortion, algorithmic ‘rabbit holes’ leading children to self-harm, automated ‘doxing’, and AI-generated content intended for social sabotage, among others. Furthermore, the State shall adopt a policy that children under a

certain age, to be established by law after consultation with experts in the field, shall have no access to social media.

(3) Victims of bullying shall have access to confidential reporting mechanisms and psychological and social support services.

Hate speech, discrimination, and social exclusion.

11. (1) Public authorities shall work actively to prevent hate speech, behaviours, and social narratives that foster exclusion and loneliness.

(2) Targeted initiatives shall be developed, in consultation with minority groups, to promote inclusion, strengthen community participation, and reduce isolation.

Creative arts as a tool for connection and integration.

12. (1) Creative expression shall be recognized as a means of self-discovery, a tool for mental well-being, and a medium for social integration.

(2) The State shall support community support measures such as arts-based programs in schools, communities, and care settings, and partnerships with cultural and voluntary organizations.

Governance, monitoring, and accountability.

13. (1) The Ministry responsible for social policy shall, within six (6) months from the date of the entry into force of this Act, establish a National Advisory Council on Loneliness and Social Connection, composed of three (3) representatives from each of the following: mental health professionals, educators, social workers, representatives of civil society, and persons with direct experience of loneliness.

(2) The Minister for responsible social policy, as the rapporteur, shall have the obligation to lay on the Table of the House an Annual Report prepared by the National Advisory Council on Loneliness and Social Connection, upon which the House shall immediately thereafter hold a debate without a vote to evaluate progress, challenges, and recommendations. Such debate shall be held no later than one month from when the Annual Report is published.

Monitoring powers and mandatory responses.

14. (1) The National Advisory Council on Loneliness and Social Connection shall monitor the implementation of this Act and of the Strategy.

(2) The Council may issue written recommendations to the Minister responsible for social policy and to any relevant public authority.

(3) Any Minister or public authority to whom a recommendation is addressed shall, within ninety (90) days, publish a response indicating whether the recommendation is accepted and, where it is not accepted, the reasons for such decision.

Funding and implementation.

15. (1) It shall be the responsibility of the Minister responsible for social policy that the implementation of this Act shall be supported by dedicated financial resources.

(2) Without prejudice to any other law, not less than zero point five per cent (0.5%) of the annual budget allocated to social policy programmes shall be earmarked for measures directly related to the implementation of this Act and of the Strategy.

(3) In allocating funds under this clause, priority shall be given to:

- (a) the strengthening of existing services;
- (b) collaboration between public authorities, local councils and voluntary organisations; and
- (c) measures demonstrated to be effective in reducing loneliness and social isolation.

PART III

Amendments to the Voluntary Organisations Act

Amendments to the Voluntary Organisations Act.
Cap. 492.

16. This Part amends the Voluntary Organisations Act and shall be read and construed as one with the Voluntary Organisations Act, hereinafter in this Part referred to as the “principal Act”.

Amendment of article 5 of the principal Act.

17. In article 5 of the principal Act immediately after the words “Voluntary Organisations” there shall be added the words “, well-being and the fight against loneliness”.

Amendment of article 7 of the principal Act.

18. Article 7 of the principal Act shall be amended as follows:

(a) in paragraph (m) of sub-article (1) thereof the words “under any other law.” shall be substituted by the words “under any other law;” and immediately thereafter there shall be added the following new paragraphs:

“(n) to see and ensure that every government policy in the field of transport, housing, and health is measured according to its impact on social exclusion and loneliness before implementation;

(o) to ensure that a National Strategy for connectivity in society is developed, which Strategy must be updated every three (3) years. This Strategy shall, among other things, identify, monitor, and reduce the prevalence of loneliness in Malta by making the best use of the resources of voluntary organizations in the country;

(p) to ensure it acts as the primary coordination point between the Ministry for Health, the Ministry for Social Policy, and the Ministry for Education to fulfill legislative obligations against loneliness and social exclusion, particularly those under the Combating of Loneliness and the Strengthening of the Well-being of Society Act, 2026;

(q) to administer the fund known as the “Social Connection Fund” intended for those voluntary organizations that create third places such as community hubs, clubs, and intergenerational programs, with the involvement of the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector;

(r) to ensure that its voice is heard on every urban development to ensure that public spaces foster and strengthen social contact and interaction;

(s) to ensure that Local Councils share and coordinate with it effectively on initiatives to combat loneliness in their localities.”;

(b) immediately after sub-article (5) thereof there shall be added the following new sub-article:

“(6) The Commissioner shall establish an Advisory Council within his Office composed of an equal number of mental health experts, civil society, and citizens with direct experience of loneliness, and an equal number of representatives from the Government and from the Opposition.

(a) This Advisory Council shall have the duty to make recommendations to the Commissioner in an annual report on the state of loneliness in the country, which shall be laid on the Table of the House by the Minister responsible for social policy forthwith.

(b) This Annual Report on the state of loneliness in the country shall be the subject of a debate without a vote in the House of Representatives within one month from when it has been laid on the Table of the House.”.

Objects and Reasons

The objects and reasons of this Bill are that while loneliness is recognized as a matter of social and public health importance, the State recognizes the positive obligation of the Government to advance policy to combat loneliness and strengthen social connection and community participation. The Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations is being significantly strengthened, having the duty to be a key link for this purpose, for the full well-being of Maltese society, as a main pillar of the building of the future of our country.