

Malta seeks to revise Vatican concordat on divorce

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Malta is in negotiations with the Vatican about ending the Catholic Church's influence over divorce on the island.

The Maltese Government legalised divorce in 2011, but under a concordat with the Vatican, Ecclesiastical Tribunals can veto the dissolution of Catholic marriages even if such dissolutions have been agreed with the civil authorities.

Now the Maltese government has sent a *note verbale* to the Holy See's nuncio, initiating negotiations with Vatican on revising the 1992 Church-State agreement.

Under the agreement, the civil courts had to stay any proceedings for the annulment of marriages contracted in the Catholic Church if one of the spouses initiated separate proceedings for an annulment from the Roman Curia. The ecclesiastical tribunal's decision would then have to be considered final by the civil courts.

The concordat was sealed by prime minister Eddie Fenech Adami and foreign minister Guido de Marco back in 1993, a year after the treaty, but since his election, Prime Minister Joseph Muscat said he would revise the agreement.

Muscat has already had talks with Archbishop Paul Cremona and Auxiliary Bishop Charles Scicluna. "The Maltese government believes the civil courts must be the supreme entity in marriages so that there can be a separation of church and state. There is a similar will to have a satisfactory agreement between the government and the church," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

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