



**Speech by Perit Andre Pizzuto,
President of the Kamra tal-Periti,
on the occasion of the
Premju Emanuele Luigi Galizia Award Ceremony
at Villa Bighi**

25/10/2025

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Honourable members of Parliament, colleagues and friends,

Good evening,

As we approach the closing moments of this year's *Premju Galizia* – just before we announce the final award of the evening – I want to take a moment to reflect on what this year's edition has come to represent.

The theme we chose for *Premju Galizia 2025* is about “Legacy”.

It is a fitting theme to end on, because legacy is not only what we inherit – it is also

what we leave behind.

It is the measure of how our decisions today will shape the Malta of tomorrow.

The architecture we design today becomes the physical manifestation of our collective values and ambitions.

It will tell future generations who we were — what we cared about, and how deeply we believed in quality, place, and purpose.

Our legacy will not only be written in policy or regulation, but in the walls, streets, and spaces that define our daily lives.

Yesterday's public presentations before our distinguished jury were, as always, an inspiring showcase of the passion and creativity within our profession.

We saw works that embodied perseverance, innovation, and above all, purpose.

They reminded us that architecture is an act of imagination as much as it is an act of service — an ongoing conversation between context, culture, and community.

And yet, one common thread ran through nearly all those presentations.

It wasn't technical obstacles or engineering challenges that sapped energy from these

projects.

Indeed, one of yesterday's presentations even spoke about rising to the challenge of having *no budget at all*.

The real challenge, the one that consistently undermined design integrity, was the planning approval process.

We saw how promising concepts were slowly diluted, reshaped, and hollowed out by the time they reached approval — their original ethos diminished by compromise and bureaucratic caution.

But the erosion of design quality does not come only from the system itself.

It also comes from clients — clients who, faced with the risk of a planning refusal, get cold feet.

This has created a dynamic where clients seek out *periti* who are known to “get permits,” rather than those who create good architecture.

And this dynamic is dangerous. It rewards expediency over excellence, compliance over creativity, and undermines the very idea of architectural legacy.

Yesterday, at the start of the presentation sessions, I mentioned that my favourite part of *Premju Galizia* is not the ceremony itself, but those presentations.

For those of us who live and breathe architecture, they are like an oxygen tank.

They allow us to pause, to breathe, to remember why we chose this profession in the first place — to recover a little of the sanity that daily practice sometimes drains away.

My colleagues on the Council and I have listened attentively to your frustrations — your pleas for a system that values design quality and respects the role of the architect in shaping our built environment.

Over recent months, we have intensified our discussions with the Planning Authority to bring about reforms that favour good architecture and good architects.

The partnership between the Kamra tal-Periti and the Planning Authority in this year's *Premju Galizia*, and the address by Mr Johann Buttigieg earlier this evening, are proof of our mutual commitment to move beyond rhetoric and work together to address these challenges.

Because this is not merely a professional concern — it is a national one.

The quality of our built environment shapes our daily lives. It influences social wellbeing, economic vitality, and even national identity.

It is therefore no surprise that this topic has become politically and emotionally charged.

The reaction of several NGOs to the proposed planning bills is a clear symptom of a breakdown in trust between the various stakeholders involved.

We must all make an effort to rebuild that trust, through genuine dialogue and a willingness to find common ground. We therefore urge all parties to seek common ground — to replace antagonism with dialogue, and confrontation with constructive engagement.

Regrettably, the public debate on planning reform has become narrowly legalistic.

It is framed around what constitutes a good *legal* outcome — for applicants or objectors — rather than what constitutes a good *architectural* outcome for our communities.

As a Kamra, we must state this clearly: **good planning is not done through the submission of planning applications, and environmental protection is not achieved**

through the filing of objections.

These are administrative acts, not instruments of vision.

If we continue to conflate them with the true objectives of planning, we will remain trapped in a cycle of mediocrity and mistrust.

Both sides of the debate must understand that if we continue to reduce our national planning conversation to this level, we will never achieve a built environment that is truly worthy of our aspirations.

It is my duty, as President of this Chamber, to steer this debate back to where it belongs: on the quality of architecture and the enhancement of our built environment.

The frustration and disillusionment we are witnessing across the country are not simply reactions to policy — they are expressions of a deep yearning for a better, more thoughtful approach to how we shape our surroundings.

If we fail to respond to these sentiments, we risk perpetuating mistrust and disengagement.

It falls upon our political leaders — and indeed, upon our industry leaders, many of whom are here tonight — to direct our development model toward one that is responsive to public sentiment and grounded in responsibility.

We must move away from a planning system driven by speculative development — development that extracts value from our land, our heritage, and our communities — towards a model of sustainable development, one that adds value, enhances what already exists, and creates a lasting legacy in the process.

One of the key ways to achieve this is through the creation of a National Architecture Policy — a shared vision supported by both government and industry.

Such a policy would recognise the social, cultural, and economic importance of architecture and embed design quality at the heart of our national agenda.

Among the strategies we are putting forward is the creation of Design Review Panels — expert panels of architects tasked with assessing projects on their architectural merit, independently of planning policy.

These panels would allow *periti* to present their work as architects — to discuss concept development, materiality, context, and community benefit.

And the concept behind these panels mirrors closely the “crit” format we experienced in yesterday’s presentations — where architects could explain their intentions, receive constructive feedback, and engage in a dialogue that enriches the work rather than diminishes it.

The public would also be invited to participate in this process, breaking down barriers between applicant and objector, and fostering a participatory approach to how our towns and villages evolve.

At the end of this process, the panel would issue a recommendation that could accompany the planning application — allowing the architectural discussion to close, and the planning evaluation to focus only on objective, quantitative criteria such as land use and environmental impact.

I am pleased to confirm that as a result of frequent and constructive meetings between the Kamra tal-Periti and the Planning Authority, we are now at an advanced stage in reaching an agreement to begin developing Malta’s first National Architecture Policy.

Before closing, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who made this year’s edition possible —

to our distinguished jury, for their dedication and discernment;
to our sponsors, for their continued support of architectural excellence;
and to I+A, for their outstanding artistic direction that continues to elevate the Premju Galizia experience year after year.

Legacy, in the end, is not built by accident.

It is shaped by intention — by a shared conviction that what we design, build, and approve must serve the greater good.

Let us therefore work to ensure that tomorrow's Malta reflects the very best of who we are today — thoughtful, courageous, and grounded in purpose.

Thank you.

END