



Chairperson Report 2025

Presented during AGM 03rd March 2026

During 2025, the Board of Administrators convened a total of ten meetings, held on the following dates: 16 January, 20 February, 7 March, 11 April, 8 May, 19 June, 18 July, 12 September, 1 October, and 7 November.

Five of these meetings were conducted virtually, while the remaining five took place in person. A quorum was reached for all sessions, ensuring valid discussions and decision-making throughout the year.

Between meetings, ongoing communication was maintained among board members and member organizations through emails and phone calls, supporting continuity and effective collaboration.

Board Elections – 2025

Board elections were conducted during the 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM), through which the Malta Health Network (MHN) Board was constituted.

Following the elections, the first board meeting was held and The MHN Board for the 3 years 2025-2028 is composed as follows:

Gertrude Buttigieg (Chairperson)
Chris Vella (Vice- Chairperson)
Marcelline Warrington (Secretary)
Demis Cachia (Treasurer)
Dr. Christine Baluci (member)
Godwin Micallef (member)
George Sultana (member)
Vivien Cassar (co-opted member)

Funding and Support

The Malta Health Network (MHN) does not engage in fund-raising activities; its only regular source of income remains the annual membership fees. In 2025, MHN received financial support through the Small Initiative Support (SIS), Training Initiative Scheme (TIS), and Civil Society Fund(CSF) schemes funded by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS).

SIS Funded Project – *Up to You*

With funds primarily obtained through the SIS scheme, MHN produced bilingual booklets in English and Maltese under the project title *Up to You*. These booklets aim to raise awareness of three key themes:

Patient Empowerment

Self-Management

Patient–Professional Communication

The booklet *To Be Seen & To Be Heard (Arani u Ismagħni)* was developed as a follow-up to the videos produced in 2024 under the VOPS project. SIS provided 80% of the funding for this initiative, with additional support from Ganado Advocates, Brown’s Pharma Ltd, and Pfizer. The project commenced in 2024 and was successfully concluded in 2025.

TIS Funded Project – Transforming Health Through Patient Empowerment

Through funding primarily obtained via the TIS 2025 scheme, MHN had to organize a series of six training sessions under the project title *Transforming Health Through Patient Empowerment*. Four (4) sessions were held in 2025 and another 2 held in 2026. These sessions were tailored for both member organizations and the public to strengthen knowledge and foster greater engagement in patient-centered health practices.

This project is fully funded under the TIS 2025 scheme, which is managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) supported by the Ministry for Inclusion and Voluntary Sector. Additional support for these sessions was provided by Brown’s Pharma Ltd and Vivian Corporation.

The Tony Guillaumier Award

The Tony Guillaumier Award was established to recognize and celebrate the impact of organizations actively engaged in the field of health and their participation in the work of the MHN. This is an initiative and fully funded by Mr Anthony Guillaumier himself. The primary aim of the award is to honor the service provided by voluntary organizations towards improving community health. The award also seeks to raise awareness of the exemplary values

demonstrated by these organizations, positioning them as role models for wider society, while acknowledging their significant contributions across various fields and their collaboration with MHN in advancing health initiatives.

MHN board members appointed a dedicated working group to develop the documents required for this initiative, including the application template, award information, and guidance on completing the online application and participating in the process.

A separate working group, the Guillaumier Award Adjudication Team, was established to assess the applications. This team was composed of both MHN and external members to ensure fairness and transparency. These members were: Mr. Godwin Micallef acting as Chairperson, Mr. Mauro Pace Parascandolo from MCVS, and Ms. Daniela Calleja Bitar from Richmond Foundation. Secretary to the board was Ms. Melanie Agius Attard on behalf of MHN.

In 2025, MHN launched the first call for nominations among its member organizations. Four nominations were received from:

Malta Dementia Society

ARAM

Europa Donna Malta

Caritas Epilepsy Malta

The winner for 2025 was the **Malta Dementia Society**, which was awarded a cash prize of €1,000 together with a commemorative trophy. The other nominees were each recognized with a cash prize of €200 and a certificate in appreciation of their efforts and participation.

This award is intended to become an annual tradition, as announced by Mr. Tony Guillaumier during the inaugural ceremony in September 2025.

Membership Update

34 members paid their membership fee for the year 2025. 10 members did not renew their membership fee. 2 of these member organizations have not renewed their membership fee for the past 2 years. Several attempts were made to get in touch with these organizations however, they never replied. 1 new Foundation, the Malta Revive Foundation, joined MHN in 2025.

Events held in 2025

In January 2025, MHN held the SIS project closing event at the Life Sciences Park, San Gwann launching the bilingual booklets *To Be Seen To Be Heard / Arani u Ismani* to promote patient empowerment, self-management, and effective patient–professional communication. Members and distinguished guests, including Hon. Graziella Galea, Shadow Minister for the VO sector, and Prof. Serracino Inglott, attended the event. Both Minister Julia Farrugia and Minister JoEtienne

Abela, were invited but were unable to attend on the day. MHN also introduced the Tony Guillaumier Awards.

On 30 September 2025, MHN launched its training programme *Transforming Health Through Patient Empowerment*, aimed at patients, member organizations, and the public. During the opening session, the Malta Dementia Society was announced as the winner of the Tony Guillaumier Award. Additional training sessions were held on 29 October and 18 November 2025.

Meetings with local stakeholders

Throughout 2025, MHN held 20 local meetings with national entities and other stakeholders. The table below lists these meetings.

Date of meeting	Meeting with	Reason for the meeting
13 th January & 12 th March	PASQUIT Team MDH, Mr. Joe Debono and Dr. Sandra Buttigig	Involving patient representatives at MDH on Patient Safety matters
20 th January	Mr. Aaron Fenech -Manager of The Cancer Research Foundation and Innovation Hub	Explore potential areas of collaboration between MHN and the Foundation
14 th February	Malta Medicines Authority	Online dispensing to 3 rd countries
20 th February	Vivian Corporation	Collaboration with regards to projects
3 rd March	Malta Medicines Authority and Profs. Serracino Inglott	Issue of online pharmacies
6 th March	Dr. Elaine Cutajar	Motivating ourselves and our patients and improved collaboration with Health Promotion
26 th March	Dr. Mariella Borg Buontempo & Ms. Phoebe Woodford	Hu Kontroll Programme
26 th March	Vivian Corporation	Patient empowerment - access to treatment
14 th April	Mr. Edward Mizzi and Mr. Joseph Cutajar	New Hope project, working committee
16 th June	Malta Chamber of Commerce	Health Care Business section committee – Access to medicines
21 st August	EUPATI Malta fellows	EUPATI training academia and welcome new members
1 st September	Mr. Domnic Garcia from Rise Foundation	MHN participation in the Rise Foundation Conference and workshop
1 st September	Dr. Stefan Buttigieg -Digital Health Malta	Training session on Digital Health

23 rd September	Hon. Dr. Amanda Spiteri Grech	Right to be forgotten consultation
23 rd October	Representatives from Henley & Partners	Developing a Citizenship by merit framework, Funding for projects under the new scheme
18 th November	Profs Nikolai Paul Pace	Dwarna Bio and Patient representative on the European Biobank Network
24 th November	Profs Edward Callus	Training session on Patient Empowerment: From Individual Patient to Patient Community

Articles for the malta independent

Throughout 2025, the Malta Independent kept its support to MHN and its members by offering free publication of articles monthly. During 2025, 12 articles were published by member organizations

Date of publishing	Entity	Title of Article
18 th January	St. Jeanne Antide Foundation	Families are the unsung heroes in Mental Health Care
2 nd February	Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association	Living Successfully with epilepsy: A journey of resilience and hope
3 rd March	Association of Speech and Language Pathologists	The role of schools in enriching communication environments
6 th April	Arthritis Rheumatism Association Malta	The EULAR Manifesto
13 th April	Amputees 4 Amputees Association	Empowering Amputees
27 th April	Mental Health Association Malta	Urge to implement support assessments for families caring for people with mental health illnesses
25 th May	Coeliac Association Malta	Understanding Coeliac disease: Symptoms, risks and support
29 th June	Malta Chamber of Pharmacists	125 years young: A legacy of service, innovation and patient-focused care
6 th July	SOS Malta	Building a better society: SOS Malta shines light on four projects driving change
19 th July	Hospice Malta	How Hospice Malta supports patients through specialized services
12 th October	Richmond Foundation	Mental Health First Aid: Building a culture of care in Malta

In addition to articles in the Malta Independent, MHN was invited to contribute an article to Torċa, which was published on 5 October 2025 under the title '*Il-Pożizzjoni tal-Malta Health Network: It-titjib mixtieq,*' written by MHN Chairperson Ms. Gertrude Buttigieg.

Collaboration with European & International organizations

Thanks to the Civil Society Fund, MHN maintained full membership in the European Patients' Forum (EPF), European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (IAPO), and Volunteurope, while sustaining strong connections with SIP, EUPATI, WPA, and ACN. In 2025, George Sultana continued to serve as MHN's representative on the EPHA board, holding the position of treasurer.

European Patients Forum (EPF)

At the EPF Annual General Meeting, Gertrude Buttigieg represented MHN and presented the MHN booklet to EPF President Marco Greco.

WHO

MHN's projects were also recognized internationally during the 2025 WHO Annual High-Level Meeting of the Small Countries Initiative, hosted in Bled, Slovenia. MHN's work on patient empowerment was showcased as a best practice from Malta, highlighting innovation and social participation.

Societal Impact of Pain

Though it has been difficult to hold events nationally targeting specifically Chronic Pain, we have maintained regular contact with SIP Europe through participation in online meetings and concluded the translation into Maltese of material produced by SIP.

<https://europeanpainfederation.eu/sip-news/new-sip-resources-translations-available/>

<https://europeanpainfederation.eu/sip-news/translations-available-digital-health-position-paper-and-icd-11-position-paper/>

Further to this Ms Gertrude Buttigieg and Dr Mario Grixti participated in the SIP Advocacy Toolkit Training on 15th October and joined the meeting held at the European Parliament: SIP Event - From Burden to Prevention: Reframing Chronic Pain in EU Health

SAFEPOLYMED project

MHN is participating in the Safe Polymed Project (<https://www.safepolymed.eu/>), specifically through the Patient Organization Hub, which aims to incorporate the patient's perspective into the development and validation of patient-reported outcomes (PROs) for safety assessment in

polymedication. The project began in 2023 and is ongoing. Dr. Christine Baluci serves as our main contact for this initiative.

EUPATI

In 2025, MHN, in collaboration with EUPATI, attempts to revive EUPATI Malta platform with new members was taken. Four new members joined the initiative, and it is hoped that EUPATI is promoted more in Malta. We are trying to get accreditation for the Fellowship and Professionals training to be able to encourage better uptake from Maltese patients or professionals.

Volonteuroppe

Communication and collaboration were maintained with Volonteuroppe during 2025. Gertrude Buttigieg represented MHN at the Volonteuroppe General Assembly on 26-27 May 2025 in Brussels. Following the general assembly Volonteuroppe presented projects they are actively involved in including 4Voices - Reflecting Europe's Past where youths were encouraged to explore Europe's history as a learning experience to reflect on European Culture and ECI4Water - European Citizens' Initiative for a Water-Smart and Resilient Europe where the project will look at the importance of protecting water for everyone and have better water management and infrastructure system.

Other Collaborative Initiatives

We are regularly invited by European and International organizations to contribute to documents by revising content, responding to surveys, participating in consultations and questionnaires, and engaging in interviews and focus groups.

Urgent call for Cleaner Air and Better Lung Health

MHN backed the European Lung Foundation's global call for urgent action on the worsening air pollution crisis, which causes over 7 million deaths each year and disproportionately harms people's respiratory conditions. Working alongside the WHO, the European Respiratory Society, and other health partners, MHN supported demands for stronger emission reductions, clean energy transition, stricter air quality standards and greater health equity. MHN also encouraged the public and stakeholders to join the call, advocating for cleaner air and healthier lungs for everyone. ICD-11 Position Paper Translation

Participation in the survey "Discovering the Demands and Needs of Patients in Personalized Medicine."

This survey aimed to support the European Partnership for Personalized Medicine (EP PerMed) in identifying ways to foster and maximize the impact of personalized medicine for patients, citizens, and society. The findings will help refine EP PerMed's activities to accelerate the

development, innovation, and uptake of personalized medicine, and will inform regional, national, and panEuropean priority setting. This survey was also widely distributed with MHN’s member organizations.

ACN request for co-authorship on the “10 Policy Recommendations for Promoting Vaccination: The Citizens’ Perspective for the New Eu Institutions.”

The objective was to publish and promote a policy document outlining ten civic oriented recommendations on vaccination, developed by ACN with contributions from MHN and representatives of other European organizations. Further to this Mr Emmanuel Mercieca, represented MHN at VaccinAction & FACILITATE events on the future of health on 3 & 4 December 2025 in Brussels.

At the local level, in 2025, MHN participated in a range of events and conferences as outlined below.

Date	Event	Details
28 th February	Rare Disease Conference	MHN was represented by Gertrude Buttigieg
17 th March	Person Safety & Clinical Risk Management in Health and Social Care	Seminar organized by Department of Health Systems Management & Leadership – attended by Gertrude Buttigieg
30 th April	Training session for NGO’s: Project Development and writing	Training session held by SEM (Servizzi Ewropej f’Malta) and MHN was represented by Dr. Christine Baluci
8 th May	Day seminar on Collaborative Management of Chronic MSK pain	The seminar, organized by the Malta Association of Osteopaths and MHN was represented by Dr. Christine Baluci
17 th May	M CVS National Conference	MHN was represented by Gertrude Buttigieg
July – November	SAFEST Project	As part of the Safest project, MHN was invited for a visit to MDH and was represented by Gertrude Buttigieg for various face to face and online meetings
27 th September	Regional Port Council Annual General Meeting	MHN was represented by St. Jeanne Antide Foundation
7 th to 9 th October	MCAST Fresher’s week	MHN, together with Richmond Foundation, ADHD Malta, SOS Malta, The National Alliance for Rare Disease Malta, The Mental Health Association Malta, The

		Transplant Support Group Malta, and St. Jeanne Antide foundation either hosted their own stand or shared a stand with MHN
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On a European & International level, MHN also participated in a range of events and conferences as outlined below.

Date	Title of conference or event	Represented by
Jan-December	EPHA meetings	Mr. George Sultana who holds the position of EPHA treasurer
13 th March	ACN Conference: Protection of patient rights in EU member states	Mr. Chris Vella
20 th March	Medical Errors in Europe: Breaking Barriers and Strengthening Reporting Systems online by WPA	Ms. Gertrude Buttigieg
20 th - 21 st May	The European Patients' Organizations Second Riga Congress	Ms. Sina Bugeja OBO MHN
24 th - 25 th May	EPF AGM	Ms. Gertrude Buttigieg
26 th - 27 th May	Volunteurope AGM	Ms. Gertrude Buttigieg
5 th June	Anti-Microbial Resistance Circle Meeting	Mr. Godwin Micallef
25 th - 26 th September	Launch of the report: Social Inequalities in Health in the EU	Dr. Christine Baluci
15 th - 16 th October	SIP conference: Advancing and prevention in Europe- SIP Advocacy toolkit	Dr. Mario Grixti and Gertrude Buttigieg
26 th - 27 th November	EPF Congress	Mr. Chris Vella
3 rd - 4 th December	ACN Conference on vaccination and facilitate events on the future of Health	Mr. Emmanuel Mercieca obo MHN

MHN played a key role in promoting members' events through its communication channels, including Facebook and the MHN website. Information about activities organized by member organizations was circulated within the network, while newsletters from European affiliations and important updates from local entities were also disseminated to members.

MHN also regularly shares Facebook posts from member organizations on its official page. Although not all posts can be shared, those in which MHN is tagged or that are deemed particularly significant are highlighted to ensure wider visibility.

In addition to sharing information about events with members, MHN board members occasionally attend activities organized by member organizations. While it is not always possible to participate in every event or accept all invitations, MHN strives to be present and engaged as much as possible.

Local Consultations

In 2025, MHN was involved in local discussions when it comes to patient empowerment, and these meetings were held with the Housing Department about the New Hope Project and a meeting with Hon. Dr. Amanda Spiteri Grech, with regards to the right to be forgotten, MHN showed her position.

Consultation Regarding Assisted Voluntary Euthanasia (AVE)

The MHN took a very active part in the ongoing discussion on Assisted Voluntary Euthanasia (AVE), starting with meetings with the Geriatric Medical Society of Malta at SVPR regarding Advanced Care Plans. A position paper was written taking into consideration the written views sent by the member association at MHN's request Dr Christine Baluci complied document with MHN position and this was submitted officially in June 2025 via the consultation portal.

Consultation on Online Dispensing of Medicinal Products to Third Countries

On 14 February 2025, the Malta Medicines Authority convened a consultation meeting on the framework for online dispensing of medicinal products from Free Zones and Customs Warehouses in Malta to consumers in third countries. MHN was represented by Dr Christine Baluci, who attended in person, and Gertrude Buttigieg, who participated online.

The proposed framework addresses the entry, storage, handling, online dispensing, and export of medicinal products, ensuring compliance with recognized standards of good pharmacy practice. License holders engaged in online dispensing are required to guarantee that all medicinal products meet the highest standards of safety, quality, and efficacy.

Key aspects under discussion included licensing requirements, operational compliance, patient safety, quality assurance, and regulatory obligations.

Following the consultation, MHN prepared and submitted its final position paper.

Consultation on National Patient Safety Strategy

MHN board members reviewed the draft NPSS and compiled a feedback document listing MHN'S concerns and recommendations this was submitted to the relevant authorities in October 2025 following a meeting which was held with representatives from member organisations in September 2025

Unfortunately, due to MHN's limited resources we were unable to contribute to the Consultation on the new National AI Strategy and the Consultation on Digital Health and Health Data Strategy.

Meeting on Proposed EU Amendment on Online Pharmacies

MHN met with the Malta Medicines Authority to discuss the proposed amendment to Directive 2001/83/EC concerning online pharmacy services. This issue was introduced to MHN by the OnHome Alliance through EPF. The focus was the proposed change in wording that would *allow patients to buy medicines online*, an option not currently permitted under the existing Directive.

While the initiative aims to improve patient equity in access to medicines, MHN highlighted Malta's unique context. Allowing online pharmacies may risk disadvantaging smaller community pharmacies, which play a vital role in providing personalized, accessible patient support at the local level.

MHN assistance to patients

MHN was contacted by a number of patients due to difficulties they were facing in getting a diagnosis for their condition, others for accessing medicine or relevant treatment and others who claimed injustice in the national healthcare system when doctors had no answers for their conditions and were being referred to psychiatric services. These were tackled via emails, phone calls and face – to- face meetings. However often these patients did not follow-up on their queries and were lost to follow-up from MHN.

Proposals for funding

SOS Malta has asked MHN to participate as partners or collaborators in EU funded project named: The Impact of Digital Technologies on children's Health: Investing Merits, Perils and Advancements related to children's use of Technology (IMPACT 2025), which project was going to be an international conference being held in Malta about the Impact of Digital Technologies on Children's health, but unfortunately we did not make it for funding.

Acknowledgements

The MHN extends its sincere appreciation to the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the Ministry for Environment, Energy and public Cleansing for once again approving the secondment of Ms Melanie Agius Attard, whose support continues to be invaluable in administrative work and the development of upcoming projects.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Malta Medicines Authority for their ongoing collaboration and support through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) established several years ago, which continues to support MHN's initiatives.

Our appreciation also goes to Brown's Pharma Ltd, Vivian Corporation, Ganado Advocates, and Pfizer for their valuable support during 2025. We look forward to continuing these partnerships in the years ahead.

The Future

- Upon conclusion of the TIS funded training sessions recordings from these sessions will be available on MHN YouTube Channel and link will be made available on MHN website in the page designated for the project. Attendance at these sessions is highly encouraged.
- MHN applied for the VOPS scheme through MCVS, and the project proposal was made for funding. The project will start in 2026. The title is: **Towards a stronger Health Ecosystem: Mapping Malta's Health NGOs**. This project aims to develop a detailed profile of health-focused VOs operating within Malta. A desk-based research exercise will also be undertaken to ensure that both registered and unregistered health NGOs active on the Maltese Islands are included in the mapping process. This will ensure an inclusive and comprehensive snapshot of the sector. Identified organizations will be invited to participate in the project by completing a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will be designed to capture key information such as each organization's mission, objectives, membership, and main areas of activity. This project will increase the visibility of health-focused NGOs, enhancing their recognition among the public, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders. The information gathered from this mapping exercise will be made accessible through MHN's revamped website, social media channels, and printed materials. In 2027, a conference will be organized to present the findings and foster collaboration amongst health-related NGOs. The conference will offer participants the opportunity to strengthen their capacity and sustainability.
- More project opportunities are envisioned more details will be communicated in the coming months.

- As from January 2026, events by members and other information will be sent out in one mailshot issued on Friday Morning this will be called the MHN NoticeBoard and any members interested in having their events and news shared are encouraged to send them to us to be included in this communication.
- MHN will continue working on consultation documents, both locally and internationally, on giving the patient and our organizations a voice and we shall keep working on past projects such as EUPATI and SIP

Annex 1: List of abbreviations:

Abbreviations	Full name
EPF	European Patients Forum
EPHA	European Public Health Alliance
IAPO	International Alliance of Patient Organizations
SIP	Societal Impact of Pain
WPA	World Patient Alliance
CAN	Active Citizen Network
WHO	World Health Organization
MMA	Malta Medicines Authority
MCVS	Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector
ELF	European Lung Foundation

Annex 2:

General and Event Posts on MHN website page	
Entity	Number
MHN general posts	12
MHN events	6
Malta Dementia Society events	36
Malta Podiatrists Association events	4
Friends of Mount Carmel Hospital events	6
Action for Breast Cancer Foundation events	1
Europa Donna Events	9
Mental Health Association Malta Events	15
Hospice Malta events	6
Multiple Sclerosis Society events	3
Transplant Support Group Society events	1
SOS Malta Events	9
Karl Vella Foundation Events	7
Association of Speech and language pathologist events	2
Coeliac Association Malta events	6
Malta Association of Physiotherapists events	4
Richmond Foundation events	9
Malta Diabetes Association events	2
National Alliance for Rare Disease events	5
Friends of the sick and elderly Gozo Events	1
ADHD Malta events	3
Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association events	1

Malta Association of Occupational Therapists events	1
Amputees 4 Amputees events	1
St. Jeanne Antide Foundation	1
Total in all	200

Posts shared on Facebook	
Entity	Number
MHN general posts	22
MHN posts related to events	18
Events by member organisations	34
PostS related to EPF	8
Posts related to MCVS	1
Posts related to Volunteurope	1
Posts related to WHO	2
Posts related to Safe Polymed	1
Total in all	87

Member organization events sent via email	
Entity	Number
Malta Dementia Society	127
Europa Donna Malta	7
Karl Vella Foundation	8
Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association	3
Malta Diabetes Association	3
SOS Malta	3
Revive Foundation	2
Action for Breast Cancer Foundation	1
St. Jeanne Antide Foundation	2
Friends of Mount Carmel Hospital	3
National Alliance for Rare Disease Malta	1
Amputees 4 Amputees Association	1
Malta Association of Podiatrists	3
Malta Association of Physiotherapists	6
Mental Health Association Malta	12
Multiple Sclerosis Society	2
Malta Association of Occupational Therapists	4

Association of Speech and Language Pathologists	2
Richmond Foundation	5
Malta Eczema Society	1
Friends of the Sick and Elderly Gozo	1
Malta Coeliac Association	3
Hospice Malta	7
Arthritis and Rheumatism Association Malta	1
Malta Association of Crohn's and Colitis	1
Transplant Support Group Malta	1
Total	210