A Message from the MCVS Chairman
Dr. Noel Camilleri LL.D., LL.M.

Friends in the ideal of volunteering.

A year has just passed in which due to the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic, the whole Sector like everyone else, has faced a very difficult situation. Despite this, I still feel, even with the help of the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) that the Sector has risen to this challenge and has so far managed to overcome certain obstacles in order to continue operating.

This does not mean that you, the volunteers, did not find problems. This does not mean that there were not moments where you wanted to stop from offering your essential services. This does not mean that there were not moments where you were discouraged and you were going to say “enough.” But with the determination and collaboration of everyone your work and that of the Sector in general has not stopped there. This is all merit to what volunteering really means.

We have just started the year 2021. The problems of the pandemic are still with us. But I am convinced that with the determination and even with the help of MCVS, the Sector will adapt to the circumstances and continue its work by continuing to be of service to the community.

Today more than ever the Sector must continue to work hand in hand and in a concrete way in order to be stronger, not only between the organisations themselves. Here I must appeal to consolidate this real collaboration once again, believing in the value of voluntary work in our communities. But I feel the growing need that the Sector recognises more the Council, not
The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector continues its mission to provide support, assistance and services to the various Voluntary Organisations in Malta and Gozo even during these exceptional times.

Want to become a volunteer? Show your interest by registering yourself in the volunteering matching portal:

http://volontarjat.org/

**Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector**

The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector continued to provide support, assistance and services during the prevailing COVID-19 Pandemic.

In view of the national situation of the Corona Virus Pandemic currently hitting Malta and Gozo, the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector continued with its objectives to assist the various Voluntary Organisations on the Maltese Islands through numerous initiatives it undertook.

The following is a timeline of MCVS’s efforts to implement its mission statement and support to voluntary organisations.

**24th July**

The Centre for European Volunteering (CEV) held a webinar entitled “Volunteering in post COVID19 Crisis: What now?” CEV President, Lejla Sehic Relic opened the webinar and presentations were delivered by Micky Lefranc, Board member of France Bénévolat, Mary Gaerty, President of National Council of Women Malta, Gertrude Buttigieg, President of Malta Health Network (MHN), Mauro Pace Parascandalo, CEO of Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, George Thomson, CEO of Volunteer Scotland and Joana Bacelar, Escutismo Project Executive Coordinator.

CEV called for policymakers to “step up a gear” regarding volunteering policies and programmes. This “change of gear” should include increased focus, intensity and speed of investment and partnership development with volunteer-involving and volunteer infrastructure organisations and lead to a situation that more properly reflects the importance of the energy, expertise, and commitment of volunteers for health, well-being and solidarity in Europe, whilst avoiding the exploitation of volunteers in for-profit settings. This webinar explored the actions already planned and/or in place in different countries and contexts in Europe, and provided the space to exchange good practice and to inspire others.

**27th July**

MCVS published the 7th edition of its bi-lingual newsletter ‘Stay Connected/Żomm Kuntatt’ whereupon it gave a timeline of all the initiatives taken by MCVS and the Segretariat for Youth, Sport and Voluntary Organistaions, since the Corona Virus Pandemic struck Malta in the early days of March.

MCVS also continued to publish and promote, through its Facebook page, notices issued by various local and foreign entities as well as other voluntary organisations providing information, seeking assistance or promoting online events.

**1st August**

The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector extended its condolences to the family of Mr Ian Azzopardi who died on 1st August. Mr Azzopardi, who had served diligently and with passion in favour of the voluntary sector, was a Council member between 2008 and 2016.

The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector continues its mission to provide support, assistance and services to the various Voluntary Organisations in Malta and Gozo even during these exceptional times.
3rd August

The first updated version of the **Guidelines for Voluntary Organisations** in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic was published online on the MCVS website and Facebook page respectively. These guidelines, which are endorsed by the Public Health Authority, are intended to guide Voluntary Organisations in maintaining their operation in a safe manner.

11th August

The Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sport and Voluntary Organisations Dr. Clifton Grima, presented the Dar tal-Providenza €560,000 to assist it in overcoming the difficulties which stemmed from the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic, including the increased outlay on wages and the downturn in donations.

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The funds will come from the Operational Assistance Scheme, announced in June as part of the government’s economic regeneration plan.

The Parliamentary Secretary for voluntary organisations, Dr. Clifton Grima, visited Dar tal-Providenza to preside over an agreement with the home. He said that the Operational Assistance Scheme was the biggest ever direct investment in the voluntary sector by the government and showed the importance which organisations such as the Dar tal-Providenza had in society.

This agreement was signed by Dr. Noel Camilleri, Chairperson MCVS and Ms. Nadine Camilleri Cassano, Dar tal-Providenza administrator. Also present for this occasion were Mr. Jesmond Saliba, Member of the Board of Directors and Mr. Mauro Pace Parascandalo, CEO MCVS.

Id-Dar tal-Providenza

Id-Dar tal-Providenza was founded by Mgr. Michael Azzopardi in 1965 with the aim of offering individualised residential services to persons with disabilities in a family-like environment which enhances and maximises their abilities with a view to ensuring their full participation in society.

Today Id-Dar tal-Providenza is made up of three residences: Villa Monsignor Gonzi, Villa Papa Giovanni and Villa Papa Luciani. It also includes four community homes, called Żerniq in Siggiewi, Akkwarell in Qawra, Dar Pirotta in Birkirkara and Shalom in Zurrieq.

At the moment, Id-Dar hosts approximately hundred and fifteen persons between the ages of fourteen and over eighty years. It also offers respite services on a regular basis to families of persons with disabilities, thus offering them support to enable the disabled family member to continue to live within their family.

A small community of Sisters of St Joan Antide Thouret popularly known as Sisters of Charity have been living and giving their service to the Home since 1968 when the Home hosted the first residents.

Some of the residents spend their day by attending activities outside the Home, namely day centres. A few others have a job within the Home or outside the Home.
The second updated version of the *Guidelines for Voluntary Organisations* in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic was published online on the MCVS website and Facebook page respectively. These guidelines, which are endorsed by the Public Health Authority, are intended to guide Voluntary Organisations in maintaining their operation in a safe manner.

**14th September**

The application for funds for the *Training Initiative Scheme* (TIS) opens. This scheme supports the development of a more effective and efficient voluntary and community sector through the support in capacity building services including information, consultancy and training. This scheme closed on the 9th October 2020.

**21st September**

Now that the TV programme *Vitalità mal-Volontarjat* was approaching its final episode, MCVS announced that a new programme, aptly entitled *Daqqa t’id mal-Volontarjat*, will be transmitted on Radio Malta 1. Each programme will feature individuals coming from the voluntary sector in Malta and Gozo. These are invited to share their personal experience in the voluntary sector and the work undertaken by the voluntary organisation in which they are involved.

This program will be hosted by Mauro Pace Parascandalo and will transmitted every Thursday from 9.15pm till 10.15pm on Radio Malta 1. All *Daqqa t’id mal-Volontarjat* can be listened again on [https://maltacvs.org/daqqa-t-id-mal-volontarjat/](https://maltacvs.org/daqqa-t-id-mal-volontarjat/)

**25th September**

The final episode of *Vitalità mal-Volontarjat* is aired on TVM. This series of informative programmes was transmitted every Monday and Friday after the 18:00 news. During a total of 26 programmes, MCVS visited some of the voluntary organisations around Malta and Gozo whereupon it provide informative and educational information which the viewer surely found useful and beneficial.

This programme was presented by Ms Laura Cunningham, produced by Mr Robert Farrugia, and written and assisted by Mr Glen Chircop.

All 26 episodes can be viewed again on MCVS’s website: [https://maltacvs.org/vitalita-mal-volontarjat/](https://maltacvs.org/vitalita-mal-volontarjat/)

**29th September**

Ten voluntary organisations, specialising in animal protection, received between them the sum of €76,893. This was announced at a news conference addressed by Dr. Lydia Abela, the wife of Prime Minister Dr. Robert Abela.

Present, and also addressing this conference, were the Minister for Animal Rights Dr. Anton Refalo, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sports and Voluntary Organisations, Dr. Clifton Grima.

Dr. Lydia Abela stressed that these associations needed as much help as possible in order to continue to be the voice of animals.

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She also expressed that she would be looking forward to similar funds being granted.

Minister Dr. Anton Refalo stated that the aim of the animal protection fund is to help animal voluntary organisations carry out projects which improve animal rights, raise awareness about the responsibilities of animal carers, and assist in the progress of good practices in animal welfare. Quality of treatment as well as rehabilitation services within the community to provide better facilities for animals will also be strengthened.

Parliamentary Secretary Dr. Clifton Grima said that this scheme goes on to show how much this government is committed to giving all the possible assistance to voluntary organisations in order to ensure and guarantee the existence of the these organisations. He stated that our goal is to nurture and give the necessary tools to these organisations so that they can continue to work and carry out their impeccable work.

Dr Grima also recalled how, earlier this year, voluntary organisations benefitted from an investment of €3,000,000, which is the largest direct investment ever made to the voluntary sector.

**1st October**

The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) and Malta Enterprise (ME) signed an agreement where the latter allocated an office at the Craft Village in Ta’ Bdiegi to MCVS. This office will be utilised by MCVS to provide help and information to the voluntary organizations in Gozo.

This agreement was signed by Mr. Mauro Pace Parascandalo, CEO MCVS and Mr. Kurt Farrugia, CEO ME.
Present for this opening was the Minister for Gozo, the Hon. Dr. Clint Camilleri; the Minister for the Economy, Investment and Small Enterprises, the Hon. Dr. Silvio Schembri; and the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sport and Voluntary Organizations, the Hon. Dr. Clifton Grima.

2nd October

MCVS publishes a poster in support of Pink October on its social media pages.

5th October

MCVS publishes on its social media pages a poster to commemorate World Teacher’s Day and to show support towards the teaching community in Malta and Gozo during these exceptional times.

5th October

The application for funds for the Small Initiatives Support Scheme (SIS) opens. This scheme encourages the creation of projects in areas such as training, events, publications and other initiatives related to the voluntary sector. This scheme closed on the 20th November 2020.

8th October

The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector had a cordial meeting with the Hon. Dr. Clifton Grima, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sports and Voluntary Organisation. During this meeting the Council delegation, led by Deputy Chairperson Mr. Robert Farrugia, presented the Hon. Dr. Grima with a Budget Proposal document on behalf of the Voluntary Sector. The Hon. Clifton Grima expressed his support to these initiatives. Some of the initiatives discussed where tax exemptions to Voluntary Organisations, VAT returns, utility bills and volunteer programmes to encourage students at a young age to participate in voluntary work.

10th October

The newly inaugurated MCVS office at Ta’ Dbiegi in Gozo hosts its first Open Day to promote the Youth Voluntary Work Sheme (YVW) and the Civil Society Fund (CSF).

10th October

MCVS publishes on its social media pages a poster to commemorate World Mental Health Day and to show its gratitude towards all the medical professionals working in the field of mental health in Malta and Gozo.
12th October
The application for funds for the Voluntary Organisations Project Scheme (VOPS) opens. This scheme is designed to assist applicants looking for funding on projects that can make a difference to their local communities. This scheme closed on the 13th November 2020.

12th October
Nominations for the annual National Volunteer Award open. This event falls under the Patronage of H.E. The President of Malta.

16th October
World Food Day is commemorated by yet another poster on the MCVS’s social media pages. Gratitude was expressed towards those who seek ways to reduce food shortages in Malta and Gozo during the COVID-19 pandemic.

17th October
The newly inaugurated MCVS office at Ta’ Dbiegi in Gozo hosts its second Open Day to promote the Voluntary Organisations Project Scheme (VOPS) and the Small Initiatives Support Scheme (SIS).

20th October
The third updated version of the Guidelines for Voluntary Organisations in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic was published online on the MCVS website and Facebook page respectively. These guidelines, which are endorsed by the Public Health Authority, are intended to guide Voluntary Organisations in maintaining their operation in a safe manner.

21st October
It was announced that Voluntary organisations will be exempted from paying tax on profits made throughout the year if their annual income does not exceed €50,000.

23rd October
MCVS publishes a highly received COVID-19 Risk Assessment Chart on its Facebook page.

24th October
Closing date for the voting of the vacant seat of Council Member, MCVS Environment and Animal Welfare.

26th, 28th & 30th October
MCVS holds three separate Online Information Meetings in relation to the Small Initiatives Support Scheme (SIS) and the Voluntary Organisations Project Scheme (VOPS) 202.

30th October
The fourth updated version of the Guidelines for Voluntary Organisations in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic was published online on the MCVS website and Facebook page respectively. These guidelines, which are endorsed by the Public Health Authority, are intended to guide Voluntary Organisations in maintaining their operation in a safe manner.

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2nd November

MCVS publishes a poster on its Facebook page encouraging all citizens to wear masks at all times due to the surge of infected cases. Concurrently, MCVS continued to show its support and appreciation towards the Voluntary Organisations in Malta and Gozo through a series of posters depicting quotes by renowned personalities in relation to the volunteer and volunteering in general.

5th November

The Hon. Dr. Clifton Grima, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sports and Voluntary Organisation, Mr. Ryan Borg, Head of Secretariat PSYSVO and Mr. Mauro Pace Parascandalo, CEO MCVS visit the Inspire Foundation in Marsaskala to present it with a grant of around €150,000 in funds from the Operational Assistance Scheme as part of the economic regeneration plan.

20th November

MCVS publishes on its social media pages a poster to commemorate World Children’s Day and to acknowledge those who seek ways to make the life of all the children in Malta and Gozo a memorable one.

3rd December

A poster commemorating International Day of Persons with Disabilities was published on MCVS’s social media pages. Gratitude was expressed towards those whose admirable work and sheer dedication with persons with disabilities in Malta and Gozo is truly appreciated especially in these difficult times.

5th December

On International Volunteer Day, the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector led by Chairperson Dr. Noel Camilleri and under the patronage of H.E. the President of the Republic of Malta, Dr George Vella and in collaboration with the Parliamentary Secretary for Sports, Recreation and Voluntary Organisations Dr Clifton Grima, organised the 10th Edition of the National Volunteer Award 2020.

The aim of the National Award is to give wide recognition to services by volunteers and voluntary organisations within the community, to raise awareness of the exemplary values displayed and to find role models for young people and society with more widely, as well as to acknowledge the important contributions made in various fields.

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Dr George Grech, who was awarded the National Volunteer Award 2020, began his involvement with the House of Providence more than 15 years ago. Dr Grech provides a free medical service to residents of the Providence Home, and was the mastermind behind the therapeutic pool project at the same Home.

The Youth Volunteer Award went to Martina Livori from Home Away from Home and the Volunteer Organisation Award went to Ħal Far Outreach Centre. WE Media was given recognition as Corporate Company that Supports Voluntary Organisations.

The event, production of MCVS and led by Mr Robert Farrugia, was aired on TVM 2. Photography was by Kevin Cassar.
10th December

*Human Rights Day* is remembered by MCVS through the publishing of yet another poster on its social media pages. Through this poster MCVS acknowledged those who seek ways to assist others in obtaining their human rights especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

18th December

MCVS publishes a poster commemorating *International Migrant’s Day* on its social media pages. Acknowledgement was shown towards those who assist migrants in any way possible throughout the year especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

21st December

And to conclude what was an extraordinary year, MCVS gives its Christmas and New Year Greetings on its social media pages.

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only as the entity that supports funding which is essential to the Sector, but even more for the continuous and lively support towards the same Council as the only and true voice of the whole Sector, a Council made up of members elected by yourself.

The collaboration primarily between the voluntary organisations but also collaboration between the Council and the Sector as a whole is essential. Not only so that the voice of the Sector continues to be heard, but I also feel that it is essential so that the recognition of the Sector by the general society always remains at the forefront of our country.