

MCVS National Conference 2026

**THE FUTURE OF VOLUNTEERING:
STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**

SATURDAY 16TH MAY 2026

DRAGONARA POINT BALLROOM, WESTIN DRAGONARA, ST. JULIAN'S



Malta Council for the
VOLUNTARY SECTOR

maltacvs.org



FROM BURNOUT TO BANDWIDTH

AI as a Tool for Impact

Strengthening Malta's voluntary sector for the future

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It is half past ten on a Tuesday.

A volunteer coordinator at a Maltese NGO is still at her kitchen table.

She has a **grant application due Friday**.

Twenty volunteer shifts to fill for the weekend.

Forty-three thank-you emails to donors who gave during the last fundraising drive.

She is doing all of this **for free**, after a full day at her actual job.

What if she could go to bed by nine?

Three honest claims

for the next forty minutes

01

It is already here

AI is in your sector right now, whether or not you have a policy for it.

02

The benefits are real

Within reach for an organisation of any size, on any budget.

03

The risks are also real

The sector that ignores them will pay in trust, in funding, and in the people it serves.

P A R T O N E

Where we are in 2026

The numbers behind the conversation

~80%

of nonprofits worldwide
are using AI in some part of their work

Already mainstream

- **85.6%** use generative tools like ChatGPT for content, appeals, and educational material
- **37.6%** are using speech recognition for transcripts and accessibility
- **23.7%** are using marketing automation for donor outreach
- **Smaller charities catching up:** 72% adoption versus 89% in larger ones

—
And yet...

76%

—
have no formal AI strategy

6%

—
of staff understand AI where an
AI strategy exists

43%

—
rely on a single person for every
IT and AI decision

This is a capacity gap, not a competence gap.

The Maltese reality

Different shape, same pressure

Most Maltese voluntary organisations are **small and community-rooted**.

Often operate with a **minimal formal structure**.

Operate with **very few paid staff** and a wide base of **volunteers**.

Rarely have a full-time IT professional.

Almost none have an AI lead or digital specialist.

They are not behind due to carelessness; they are **overstretched and under-resourced**.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- **Adoption is happening informally** - Staff use ChatGPT on personal accounts, with no organisational visibility.
- **Risk lives in the gaps** - GDPR exposure, reputational risk, accidental disclosure, all unpoliced.
- **Sector coordination beats solo effort** - Shared policies, shared training, shared tools.

The cost of doing nothing

What happens to Maltese VOs that wait three more years?



Funder gap widens

EU and large foundations move to AI-assisted work.
Smaller VOs lose ground.



Volunteer drain

Younger volunteers expect modern tools.
Attrition rates climb every year.



Compliance shock

EU AI Act audits begin to bite.
Retrofitting is brutal.
Early movers are already done.



Donor erosion

Donors increasingly choose organisations that
show clear impact.
AI tells that story faster.

Waiting is also a decision. And it is rarely the cheap one.

P A R T T W O

Five practical wins for Maltese VOs

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W I N 1 O F 5

Fundraising and Donor Relationships



Predict who will give, who will lapse, and who will surprise you.

- **AI propensity scoring**
Identifies donors likely to upgrade, respond, or churn before the campaign goes out.
- **Personalised appeals at scale**
What used to take a week of copywriting takes one afternoon.
- **Greenpeace Australia: five-fold ROI on direct mail**
Sixty-four high-value donors saved from lapse using AI-led targeting.
- **Accessible setup, low software cost**
A clean spreadsheet plus AI can produce donor segments tonight.

C A S E 1 O F 5



Puttinu Cares, L-Istrina and others

Annual fundraising cycles, families in London, donor relationships that span generations

THE PRESSURE

Puttinu funds accommodation for Maltese families seeking cancer treatment abroad. L-Istrina drives the year's largest single inflow through MCCF. Both depend on emotional resonance, on the same donors returning, and on coordinators tracking commitments by hand across phone calls, parish collections, SMS pledges, and online donations.

WHERE AI EARNS ITS PLACE

Unify donor records across various channels. Predict which lapsed donors will return for the campaign. Auto-draft personalised thank-you notes the same day a gift comes in. Free coordinators to make the high-value retention calls AI cannot.

WHERE AI MUST STAY OUT

Never let AI write the personal stories of the families. Authenticity is the whole asset. Never automate condolence messages. Volunteers and parents must approve every line that goes out in their name.

Volunteer matching and retention



Most VOs lose volunteers to admin friction, not to disinterest.

- **Skills-based matching**
Routes the right person to the right role by interest, skill, and availability.
- **Shift scheduling without the chasing**
Reminders, swaps, last-minute reallocation, all handled by the system.
- **Attrition flagging**
Spot the regular who has stopped signing up before they drift away for good.
- **Coordinator time freed up**
For the conversations that actually retain people.



Inspire Foundation + volunteers

Supporting hundreds of clients, plus a wider sector that lives all around the Island.

THE PRESSURE

Inspire coordinates therapy, education, and respite services for over 1,700 individuals and families. Across the sector, many organisations still coordinate volunteers informally through WhatsApp and manual sign-ups.

WHERE AI EARNS ITS PLACE

Skill tag volunteers once, then match them to the right session, respite shift, or fundraising event.
Identify volunteers at risk of disengagement.
Generate scheduling reminders in any language.

WHERE AI MUST STAY OUT

Vulnerable client matching always passes through a human coordinator.
A model that 'optimises' shift assignments could put inexperienced volunteers with clients who need specialists.
The cost of that error is not measured in efficiency.

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W I N 3 O F 5

Programme delivery and frontline support



Multilingual, always-available, and never replacing the human at the end of the line.

- **Multilingual triage**

First contact in Arabic, Chinese, French, or English. Caseworker gets context, not a cold call.

- **Out-of-hours coverage with escalation**

Available when the human team is asleep, with clear handoff paths to crisis lines.

- **Personalised learning at scale**

Many organisations reach displaced people by mobile. Some even advises farmers on WhatsApp.

- **Frees clinical staff for the cases only humans can hold**

AI does the first thirty seconds. Humans do everything that matters after.

C A S E 3 O F 5



JRS Malta + Aditus

Two organisations supporting migrants and asylum seekers, in a country where need outstrips capacity

THE PRESSURE

JRS Malta, Aditus Foundation, and many others field hundreds of enquiries per month in over a dozen languages. Caseworkers spend a significant amount of time on initial intake before substantive help can begin, and language barriers slow everything down.

WHERE AI EARNS ITS PLACE

A multilingual intake bot gathers basic context in the person's own language, summarises the case for a human caseworker the next morning, and flags urgency. Drafts translated FAQ replies for routine queries. Logs case patterns to support advocacy.

WHERE AI MUST STAY OUT

Legal advice.
Asylum eligibility.
Trauma disclosures.
Crisis escalation.
The intake bot's job is to gather, not to decide.
Every case is owned by a human caseworker from the moment substance begins.

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W I N 4 O F 5

Administration, grant writing, and reporting



The highest-payback win in the sector. Hours back per week, immediately.

- **Reformat one application for three funders in an afternoon**
MCVS, EU funding, philanthropic foundations all want the same story in different shapes.
- **Draft reports, narratives, and impact statements**
From raw notes and outcome data to first-draft prose in minutes.
- **First-draft GDPR documentation**
Ready for legal or DPO review, not waiting on it.
- **60% of budget-constrained nonprofits name grant writing as their top AI interest**
They are not wrong. Start here.



MCVS reports, and EU funding cycles

The administrative iceberg under every Maltese VO

THE PRESSURE

Every Maltese VO submitting to the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, an EU Erasmus+ call, and a corporate CSR foundation in the same quarter is writing the same story several times. Each in a different format. Each with a different word count. Each with different evidence requirements.

WHERE AI EARNS ITS PLACE

Build one master narrative for each programme, then let AI tailor it to each funder's template, tone, and required evidence.

Generate executive summaries, budget narratives, risk registers, and follow-on reporting.

Maintain a living impact dossier the AI can draw from on demand.

WHERE AI MUST STAY OUT

Numbers. AI does not check your arithmetic. Every budget line, every match-funding figure, every beneficiary count must be human-verified before submission.

A hallucinated KPI in a funded report is fraud, not a typo.

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W I N 5 O F 5

Predictive impact and demand forecasting



From reacting to events to anticipating them.

- **Forecast demand before it hits**
Food bank cycles, helpline volumes, respite care peaks, all predictable from historical data.
- **Route resources to where the next need will be**
Not where the last need was.
- **Amref Health Africa flags malnutrition risk early**
Identifies populations at risk before standard nutrition metrics confirm it.
- **World Food Programme optimises crisis response**
AI Smart Mission Planner routes capacity in fast-moving emergencies.

M A L T E S E C A S E 5 O F 5



Caritas Malta + Hospice Malta

Two organisations whose demand cycles are predictable, but only if anyone is looking

THE PRESSURE

Caritas runs free lunch services, drug rehabilitation, and family services across Malta. Hospice Malta home palliative care from St Michael Hospice in Santa Venera. Both face predictable demand peaks, both have rich historical intake data, and both currently plan capacity.

WHERE AI EARNS ITS PLACE

- Forecast needs by parish, by month, by socioeconomic indicator.
- Predict referral peaks tied to seasonal patterns.
- Optimise home-visit routes across the islands.
- Identify families likely to need follow-on support.
- Predict treatment complications.

WHERE AI MUST STAY OUT

- Triage decisions on individual cases.
- Routing a real human family to the back of a queue because a model said so is not acceptable.
- Forecasts inform planning.
- They never make the decisions.

P A R T T H R E E

The risks no one wants to discuss

If I only tell you the upside, you'll walk away unprepared.



Algorithmic bias squeezes out the smaller players

When models reward the largest digital footprint, they punish the work that happens off the grid.

Foundations using AI to screen grant applications often rely on historical funding success, published reports, and digital presence. Grassroots VOs that do the harder work in marginalised communities can lose out, not because they are less effective, but because they leave a smaller paper trail.

In Malta, much of the most important community work happens in **parishes and small charities with minimal online presence**. Algorithmic gatekeeping risks freezing them out before a human ever sees their application.

T H E L E S S O N

Audit your data sources. Force diverse representation. Mandate human review on every funding decision.

R I S K 2 O F 5

AI cannot replace human care in mental health



Synthetic empathy is engineered for engagement, not for safety.

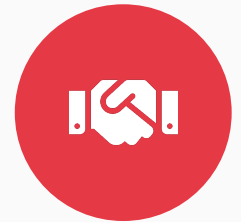
Stanford research has documented vulnerable young people forming intense emotional bonds with commercial AI companions, with tragic outcomes. **A 14-year-old** who died by suicide after extended interaction with a chatbot is the worst-case warning. Commercial AI companions are designed to maximise engagement, not to recognise crisis.

For an organisation like **Richmond Foundation** or services like **Kellimni.com**, the question is not whether to use AI, but where the line is. AI can support clinical workflows. It can offer first-line information.

It cannot, and must not, sit in the seat of the counsellor.

T H E L E S S O N

Use AI to support human care, never to substitute for it. Demand 'ethical by design' from every vendor.



Donor trust is fragile

7%

of donors say AI-generated summaries positively influenced their giving decision

67.7%

say trust is the single most important factor before they give

In a small country like Malta, where reputation travels in **hours, not weeks**, the cost of getting this wrong is much higher than the savings from getting it cheap. In 2026, Human Appeal USA issued a public statement denying social media rumours that it had used AI-generated videos in its Gaza fundraising.

THE LESSON

Use AI to draft, never to fabricate. Be transparent on your website. Tell donors what you do.

R I S K 4 O F 5

Maltese is a low-resource language



Around 500,000 native speakers. Every major AI model treats us as a rounding error.

When a Maltese VO uses ChatGPT to draft a Maltese appeal, the output is often grammatically odd, culturally generic, or simply wrong. The same problem hits other small languages.

Without intervention, AI tools will quietly default to English in Maltese organisations, and **the language will lose ground**. The opportunity is real: bias-aware generative work in Mali multiplied Bambara reading material tenfold and cut child illiteracy by 67% in pilots. Malta could do the same.

THE LESSON

Push for a Maltese voluntary sector data commons. Insist on Maltese-first tools. The language deserves it.

R I S K 5 O F 5

Deepfakes, impersonation, and donor fraud



The technology that helps you draft an appeal can also fabricate one in your name.

A convincing fake video of a known Maltese charity CEO asking for emergency donations, distributed on Facebook and WhatsApp before the real organisation wakes up, could divert **tens of thousands of euros** before anyone catches it.

Fake "endorsements" from real public figures. Fake testimonials from beneficiaries who never existed. Cloned voices on phone fundraising calls. All of this is technically trivial today, and the Maltese voluntary sector is a soft target.

T H E L E S S O N

Register signed channels. Train staff on impersonation tells. Tell donors what to verify.

The EU AI Act 2026

Malta sits inside this. It is not coming. It is here.

MINIMAL

Spam filters, basic automation. No new obligations.

LIMITED

Content generation, chatbots. Transparency disclosures required.

HIGH

Eligibility decisions, biometrics, sensitive data. Full compliance burden.

UNACCEPTABLE

Social scoring, manipulative systems. Banned outright.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

If your AI touches **eligibility for services, beneficiary screening, or sensitive personal data**, you are likely in High Risk. Build the compliance in from day one. Retrofitting is brutal.

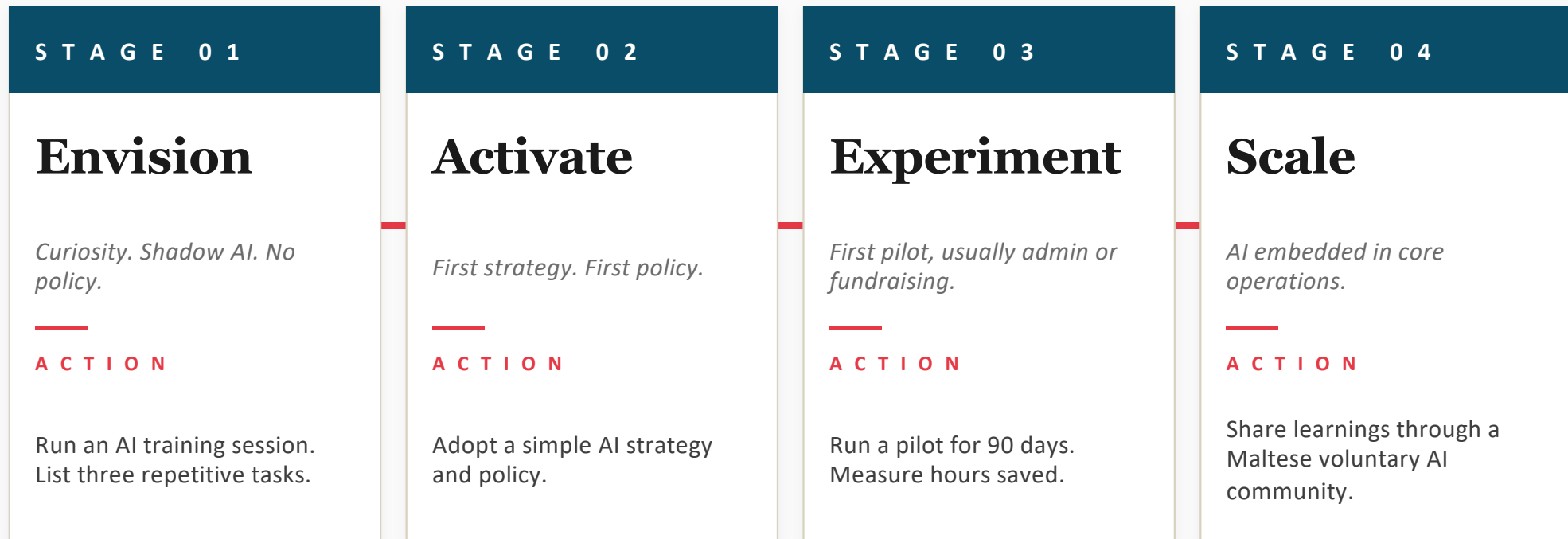
P A R T F O U R

A roadmap for Malta

From individual VO to sector-wide capacity

Four stages of AI maturity

Most Maltese VOs sit between Stage 1 and Stage 2 today.



This is bigger than any one VO

Three sector-level moves Malta should make



MCVS

Publish a baseline acceptable use policy any VO can adopt and adapt. Free, ready-to-use, GDPR-compliant.



University of Malta + IDPC

Run free clinics for VOs on EU AI Act compliance and Maltese-language data. Make compliance accessible.



Government and VOF

Fund AI capacity building, not just programme delivery. Cloud credits, training budget, shared infrastructure.

Civil society cannot be an afterthought in the national AI strategy.

A Maltese data commons

Pooled. Governed. Owned by the sector.

Smaller VOs cannot train models alone.

Large foundations build models on data scraped from the internet. The result reflects the world the data was scraped from, which is **not the world Maltese VOs work in.**

A shared, anonymised data pool, governed by the sector itself, allows even the smallest organisation to benefit from tools trained on local realities.

WHAT IT COULD HOLD

- Anonymised Maltese-language text
- Sector-wide donor and engagement patterns
- Demand cycle data for shelters, food banks, clinics
- Multilingual case-handling templates from migration support
- Cultural context no commercial model will scrape

Funding pathways for AI capacity

Where the money is, and how to ask for it



VOF and MCVS

Argue for digital capacity as eligible expenditure, not just programme delivery.



EU funding streams

Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Digital Europe, CERV. AI capacity fits multiple calls.



Philanthropic foundations

Foundations fund digital skills and AI capacity-building projects for Maltese NGOs. Apply.



Corporate CSR

Maltese banks, gaming firms, and telcos all have CSR mandates. AI for good lands well.

Stop asking for AI tools. Start asking for AI capacity. The framing makes the funder.

Strategic partnerships

You do not have to build this alone



University of Malta

Student projects, research collaboration, technical pro-bono. The Department of AI is a phone call away.



Big 4 advisory

Deloitte, KPMG, EY, PwC. All have CSR mandates and want sector reference cases.



Local tech firms

Maltese tech companies often donate hours for high-profile causes. Ask.





Peer VOs

Trade pilots and policies. What one VO learns the hard way, the next gets for free.

P A R T F I V E

Three things to do on Monday morning

Modest, specific, and within your control.

1

A C T I O N

Pick one repetitive task. Run it through AI for two weeks.

Choose something small. **Donor thank-you drafts. Volunteer rota reminders. First-pass transcription of your last board meeting.** Find a free tool. Try it. Measure how many hours you got back.



If you cannot describe what you tried in one sentence, you tried too much.




2

A C T I O N

Draft a one-page acceptable use note for your team.

Even if it just says: "We use AI to **draft**, never to send unreviewed. We never put donor or beneficiary data into a public model. We never **fabricate**." Print it. Sign it. Pin it to the wall.



Imperfect policy on day one beats perfect policy on day never.




3

A C T I O N

Find one peer VO this month. Compare notes.

Ask what they are using. Ask what went wrong. Share what you have learned.
The **Maltese voluntary sector grows together or it falls behind together.**
There is no third option.



Coffee in Valletta beats a webinar from California, every time.

A 90-day plan

After the three small actions, let's see the way forward

DAYS 1 to 30

Listen and inventory

AI literacy session for staff.
Inventory every place AI is already being used informally.
Draft acceptable use note.

DAYS 31 to 60

Pilot one win

Choose fundraising or admin.
Run a 30-day pilot.
Measure hours saved and quality.

DAYS 61 to 90

Decide and document

Keep, kill, or scale.
Document what worked.
Share with one peer VO.
Plan the next quarter.

By the time the next financial year starts, you will have a story worth telling funders.

What success looks like

Two years from now, in a well-run Maltese VO

B E F O R E

- Volunteer coordinator works until midnight, three nights a week
- Grant applications drafted from scratch each quarter
- Donor stewardship handled when there is time, which is never
- Demand surprises every season
- Sector knowledge dies with each staff exit

A F T E R

- Coordinator home by seven, doing the work that matters
- One master narrative, tailored to each funder in an afternoon
- Every donor gets a personal thank-you within 24 hours
- Capacity planned a quarter ahead, not a week behind
- Institutional memory lives in the system, not in heads

Same staff. Same budget. More human care reaching more people.



AI will not save the voluntary sector.

But the voluntary sector that learns to use AI well

will save more lives, more time,

and more dignity than the one that does not.

Prof. Alexiei Dingli

T H A N K Y O U

Questions welcome.

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