



Maltese Association of Social Workers

MASW Administrative Report June 2020 – May 2021

MASW Executive 2020/2021

- Chairperson: Ms. Charlene Martin
- Vice Chairperson: Ms. Roslynn Vella
- Secretary: Ms. Carly Zarb
- Treasurer: Mr. Bernard Borg Pellicano
- Assistant Secretary & Memberships Officer: Ms. Jillian Spiteri
- Continuous Professional Development Officer: Ms. Maria Borg Pellicano
- International Relations Officer: Mr. Andrew Azzopardi
- Media Relations Officer: Mr. Aaron Azzopardi
- Social Work Campaign Officer: Mr. Michael Farrugia
- Student Representative: Mr. Gabriel Sciberras
- Executive Committee decided that Mr. Andrew Azzopardi will represent MASW within the University of Malta and Mr. Michael Farrugia will represent MASW in the Social Work Professions Board.

As part of its ordinary business, the Executive Committee met 14 times during the year. It also dealt with the correspondence it received, mostly by email, and with a number of student requests for support with their research. In relation to this, the Association circulated a number of requests for participation in research coming from students who joined the Association, to its members. Moreover, the Association shared various social work vacancies as well as webinars, online trainings and conferences organized by other entities with its mailing list.



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MASW Memberships

During this term, official correspondence and updates were being sent to MASW Members. In addition, MASW members are obtaining a reduced price for MASW Training. At present, there are 121 members including professional, associate and student members within this association.

MASW kept the below membership prices and packages in order to attract more social workers, students and professionals to join the association:

Professional Membership (1 year) - €27	B.A.(Hons) Social Work/Policy Student Membership (1 year) - €12.50
Professional Membership (3 years +1 year free) - €81	B.A.(Hons) Social Work/Policy Student Membership (4 years) - €40
Professional Membership 65+ years (1 year) - €10	Master of Social Work/Policy Student Membership (1 year) - €12.50
Associate Membership (1 year) - €30	Master of Social Work/Policy Student Membership (2 years) - €20

Press Releases

MASW Executive Committee has taken an active role by issuing and endorsing various Press Releases during the past year. The following are the Press Releases that were issued:

- 2nd June 2020: MASW endorsed the Malta Federation of Professional Associations (MFPA) press release, *'The public deserves one unequivocal message'*. This was in relation to the statements that were being made by the Government on the situation of the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- 28th July 2020: MASW endorsed the Malta Federation of Professional Associations (MFPA) press release, *'MFPA appeals to government to be vigilant and stop mass events'*. This was a joint press statement following the impacts of the organised Mass Events on the Covid-19 cases.
- 6th August 2020: *'MFPA supports MAM and Kamra tal-Ispizjara'*. This joint press release was issued by the Malta Federation of Professional Associations (MFPA) appealing to the Government to stop mass events and allow the Superintendence of Public Health to lead decisions made in relation to the pandemic
- 14th August 2020: MASW issued a press release raising its concerns in relation to the closure of the Psychiatric Out-Patient Department at Mater Dei Hospital without a concrete plan.
- 14th October 2020: *'The Malta Federation of Professional Associations calls for collective responsibility'*. MASW endorsed this press release issued by MFPA expressing its concerns



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on the persistent rise in Covid-19 positive cases and alarming increase in the number of deaths.

- 12th March 2021: MASW was approached by the Times of Malta to state its position on the time-barring in child sexual abuse cases. Position was published in the press article titled '*Call for removal of time-barring in child sex abuse*'.
- 15th March 2021: To celebrate World Social Work Day, MASW issued a press statement titled '*UBUNTU – I Am Because We Are*' which reflected the theme chosen by IFSW. The statement highlighted the importance of the profession, the values and the true meaning of what it means to be a social worker.
- 6th April 2021: MASW endorsed the press statement, '*Where are they? Joint Civil Society Press Statement on the fate of over 100 people abandoned at sea*' that was proposed by Aditus Foundation.
- 10th April 2021: MASW formed part of the joint call in the press article of the Times of Malta titled call '*92 NGOs and 90 band clubs say new fundraising laws will strangle sector*'. NGOs jointly called for the government to withdraw new laws regarding fundraising and charity shops.
- 23rd April 2021: A press release was issued titled '*MASW Condemns Union Directives Effecting Elderly People*' following the concerns which were raised upon the directives issued which highly effected elderly patients within hospitals and those living within residential homes.
- 26th April 2021: MASW was approached by the Times of Malta to state its position and share its comments on the current drop in Care Orders and delays related to the Child Protection Court Cases. Position was published in the press article titled '*Substantial drop in care orders amid concern over court sensitivity, delays.*'
- 10th May 2021: Another statement was issued by the Association in relation to the Cannabis White Paper. '*The Maltese Association of Social Worker's statement on the White Paper regarding the Legalisation and Decriminalisation of Cannabis*' was also sent to the media and press.
- 14th May 2021: Alongside other organisations, MASW endorsed a letter which was compiled by Aditus Foundation and Moviment Graffiti regarding the worrying situation in Palestine. The letter was sent to the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and was also read out during a press conference from the Embassy of Palestine in Malta.



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Meetings with Various Entities

- A meeting was held with Hon. Dr Michael Falzon, Minister for Social Justice and Solidarity, Family and Children's Rights on 30th June 2020. During this said meeting the MASW Executive had the opportunity to discuss with the Minister the following matters: The MASW Social Work Campaign, the Social Work Profession, Centralisation of Services and Public Social Partnerships, and the Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act.
- Ms Charlene Martin and Mr Andrew Azzopardi attended the IFSW Europe Delegates Meeting which was held online during the weekend of the 6th and 7th November 2020. Mr Gabriel Sciberras, MASW Exec Student Representative, also attended as an observer as part of the young social workers group.
- On the 18th February 2021, MASW Exec held a meeting with Hon. Claudette Buttigieg, Deputy Speaker and Spokesperson on behalf of the Opposition on Social Policy and Families. During this meeting the following matters were discussed: the work being carried out by MASW, the Social Work Profession, the Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act, the importance of transparent processes and appointments, Social Workers to be prioritized for the Covid-19 Vaccine and other social matters related to children, elderly, addictions, prostitution and mental health.
- A meeting was held with Her Excellency, President Emeritus Marie-Louise Colerio Preca on 18th March 2021. During the said meeting collaborative approaches between the Association and the Malta Trust Foundation were discussed. Moreover, a request of support was also put forward to recruit social workers to offer services on a pro-bono basis to the Foundation.
- Ms. Roslynn Vella attended the Malta Federation of Professional Associations (MFPA): monthly meetings on behalf of the Executive Committee which due to pandemic were all held online. Focus was done in sharing of various experiences between the different organisations, whereby good practices in terms of work adjustments that had to be done in order to continue delivering the services required. MASW has participated in a sub-committee to amend the statute in view that the MFPA will be enrolling as a Voluntary Organisation.
- Mr Gabriel Sciberras is also forming part of the IFSW Young Social Workers project titled '*A Social Europe is Possible*'. This project aims to actively engage the young generation of social workers to continue to build on and strengthen the communities and our countries. It Another aim of this project is to also develop qualitative social services as an essential foundation for sustainable social and economic development of the communities and countries. Currently a study is taking place to identify what are the needs, wants and current situation of young social workers around Europe. At this point in time, the study involves processes such as data collection and interviews with young social workers. The later stages would include a flagship seminar and a hearing in the European Parliament.



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Social Work Professions Board

Following the composition of the Executive Committee for this year, Mr. Michael Farrugia was chosen to represent the MASW Executive on the Social Work Professions Board (SWPB) and was accepted by the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity. He replaced Dr Patricia Bonello. Ms Alexia Baldacchino was elected during the MASW Annual General Meeting 2020, to act as the members' representative on the Board instead of Ms Maria Mangion.

The SWPB carried on its work online in view of the pandemic and all warrant applications were processed to avoid unnecessary backlogs. There were continuous discussions about whether the SWPB should hold the warranting ceremony in view of the changes reality of the COVID-19 situation. Moreover, there was a shift between the Minister for Social Justice and Solidarity, The Family and Children's Rights, and the SWPB Chairperson as the person who will be dispensing the warrant certificate for successful candidates.

Plans for the work by the SWPB in collaboration with MASW and the University of Malta to work on a document that outlines plans for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) carried on. This document will include proposals of how warrant retention will be tied with CPD in an effort to improve and assure best practice within the local Social Work sector and affiliate professions. The document will be made available at consultation stage duly.

On 7 December 2020, Ms Baldacchino also attended a conference on behalf of the SWPB named '*Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Designated Authorities Conference*'.

Advocacy

Throughout this year, the Association was a voice to a number of social workers who approached the Executive Committee on arising matters. Discussions were held to provide further support, assistance and guidance.

Moreover, MASW took an active role during the Consultation Process held by the Malta Labour Party as part of their consultation exercise with different social partners in conjunction with the Party's 100 year anniversary. MASW issued a call to all the Association's members on 8th September 2020 who were asked to put forward their suggestions and proposals in relation to the Mental Health Sector in Malta. On the 17th September 2020, MASW Exec submitted a five page document of proposals and reflections on this matter based on the members' and the Executive members' perspectives and proposals.

Earlier this year, in January 2021, MASW circulated a call for interested members to become representatives of their respective social work field. The main aim behind the call was because the Executive felt that it is crucial for the Association to widen its communication with the diverse social work fields. The Executive constantly strives to be representative of all the sectors



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and present a coherent voice most especially when putting forward concerns and matters on a policy and decision making level. Therefore, on the 18th February 2021 a Whatsapp Group was created with the social work members that expressed their interest in forming part of this group to facilitate such communication. This group is currently composed of sixteen (16) social work professionals representing the fields of: children's residential homes, child protection, health, homelessness, youths, mental health, education, communities, disability, drugs, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, and prostitution. This group is also serving as an opportunity to have a more holistic picture of social work in different fields and to share knowledge and relevant information.

In February 2021, following a intensive dialogue with the Health Authorities and Government, MASW Executive has successfully managed to secure the provision of the Covid-19 Vaccination for thirty nine (39) social workers who work in non-governmental organisations and twelve (12) Fourth Year Social Work Students who were about the commence their final fieldwork placement. The Executive was very pleased that all social workers were given priority to receive the vaccine which meant that social workers could continue their frontline work more securely.

Webinars & Conferences Attended

- On 24th June 2020, Ms Charlene Martin attended the '*Child Participation Assessment Tool Online Webinar – Sharing of Findings*' organised by the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.
- On 28th September 2020, Ms Charlene Martin attended the '*National Psychosis Campaign Launch*' organised by Hearing Voices Malta and Richmond Foundation.
- On 28th April 2021, Mr Michael Farrugia attended the online webinar *Children, Obesity and Life Satisfaction* organised by the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.

Trainings & Forums Organised

- On the 15th October 2020, MASW organised the first online training session, open to all practitioners, regarding the recently enacted *Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act*. The aim of the training was to give the opportunity to practitioners present to become more familiar with the law and understand its practical implications.
 - The training was facilitated by the Directors of the Child Protection Directorate and Alternative Care Directorate, Mr Steve Libreri and Ms Remenda Grech respectively.
 - Inspector Joseph Busuttill – Malta Police Force Vice Squad, Ms Yvonne Mallia – Director of Fondazzjoni Sebħ, and Mr John Role – NFCAM Representative, formed part of the panel.



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- For this training, MASW had an overwhelming attendance of around one hundred twenty (120) practitioners ranging from different fields including: social work, counselling, psychology, psychiatry, health practitioners, education psycho-social teams, students from humanities courses, amongst others.
- Following the positive feedback received and upon high demand, MASW organised the second part of the online training session on the recently enacted *Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act*. The training took place on the 2nd December 2020 and the same speakers and panel members were present. The speakers and panel members answered various questions which were raised during the first session and a forum discussion took place.
- On the 19th April 2021, MASW organised the online training session ‘*Change Against All Odds - The Tough Road to Recovery from Addictions*’. This training was facilitated by Mr Mike Orland who provided the practitioners present greater depth of insight into issues presented through substance misuse/addictions. Thirty six (36) participants were present for this training which included professionals and students from the social work field, counselling, psychology and medical professions.
- On 5th May 2021, MASW organised a free online forum webinar regarding the White Paper related to the Decriminalisation and Legalisation of Cannabis given the period of open consultation. This forum was a platform for all social workers working within the field of addiction and beyond, to have more in-depth understanding of the matter. Fifty one (51) social work professionals and students were present for this debate.
The speakers present included:
 - Mr Andrew Bonello, ReLeaf Malta;
 - Mr Anthony Gatt, Caritas Malta;
 - Ms Maja Kohek, ENCOD;
 - Mr Mike Orland, Sedqa,
 - Mr Noel Xerri, Oasi,
 - Mr Robert Louis Fenech, Moviment Graffiti.

Survey on the Decriminalisation and Legalisation of Cannabis White Paper

In relation to the aforementioned event, MASW Executive was interested in understanding and gathering the feedback of the social workers. Therefore, on the 16th April 2021 MASW disseminated a survey regarding the Decriminalisation and Legalisation of Cannabis White Paper. This survey was circulated with social workers and social work students with the primary aim to understand the perspective of social work professionals and students on the proposed White Paper.



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A statement with feedback was formulated on the basis of the results from this Survey and following the Forum Debate. This feedback was also sent as to Parliamentary Secretariat for Civil Rights and Reforms as part of the consultation process.

Other Organised Events

- **Online Zumba Session**

On the 3rd February 2021, MASW held a charity event along with Zumba with Carly by organising an Online Zumba Session. This session was offered free of charge for MASW Members and non-members were asked to send a donation. All proceeds together with a contribution from MASW were given to *Treble Makers Malta* who were raising funds for *Fondazzjoni Sebħ* through an initiative called '*A Brighter Christmas for a Brighter Tomorrow*'. The sum of €100 was presented to *Treble Makers Malta*.

- **World Social Work Day 2021**

16th March 2021 marked World Social Work Day for the year. '*UBUNTU – I Am Because We Are*' was the theme chosen by IFSW for this year's celebration. To commemorate this important day for our profession and in conjunction with the MASW Social Work Campaign – *Believe in Change*, MASW Exec thought of an interactive and safe way how to highlight the work and achievements of the social workers during the whole month of March.

Social workers and other professionals were encouraged to submit a testimonial in relation to their positive experience and/or achievements within or in relation to the social work field. The Executive was very happy with the response received and these testimonial were gradually uploaded on the Association's Facebook Page throughout the month of March.

Moreover, the Executive was very happy to share a special message dedicated to all Maltese Social Workers received directly from the President of the International Federation of Social Workers - Europe, Ms Ana Radulescu. This message was also uploaded on the Association's Facebook Page.

Lastly, Ms Carly Zarb attended for a media interview on behalf of the Executive, where she highlighted the valuable work carried out by social work professionals. The interview was aired on the 16th March 2021 during ONE News.

- **Social Work Awards 2020/2021**

This remarkable event returned on the calendar of the Association as due to the challenges which brought the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Exec had no other option but to cancel last year's awards. However, this year the Executive was very happy with the overwhelming response of 72 nominations which were submitted for the below Award Titles. This event creates a



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special opportunity where professionals come together to celebrate the social work profession and recognise significant accomplishments.

This year the process of the nominations shortlisting was divided in two. The nominations were first shortlisted by the MASW Vice-Chairperson along with two other external juries and the winner was then chosen by an external panel of juries composed of seven individuals including the MASW Chairperson.

This year's awards include:

1. Promoting Best Practice
2. Promoting Self Development and Professional Growth in Social Work
3. Promoting the Voice of the Service User
4. Outstanding Social Work Student
5. Outstanding Newly Qualified Social Worker
6. Most Impactful Experienced Social Worker
7. Most Impactful Service of the Year – 2020/21
8. Social Worker of the Year – 2020/21

The award titles *Most Impactful Experienced Social Worker* and *Most Impactful Service of the Year – 2020/21* were introduced with this year's award list. A *Lifetime Achievement Award* will be given as an award on behalf of the MASW Executive.

Conclusion

Over the past year, the Association has continually tried to engage its members and other social workers and professionals related to our field in its various events and activities organised. In fact, a strong point which allowed the Association to engage new members was through the trainings organised.

Moreover, the Association continually strived to be representative of the maximum number of social workers especially when it faced challenging issues such as the administration of the Covid-19 Vaccine for all social workers. Therefore, the Association remains committed to keep engaging as many new members as possible and continually act on their behalf and be their representative when advocating for the benefit of the social work profession.

MASW also is following social work on an international level and was even mentioned on various occasions by IFSW Europe. MASW was praised for the work being done by the association for the social work field in Malta.