



THE UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
RESEARCH, INNOVATION
& DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Annual Report

2024



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Prof. Alfred J. Vella
Chairman, RIDT

Message from the Chairman

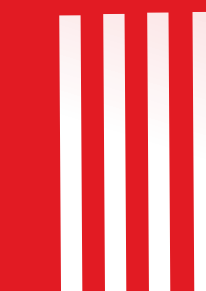
As Chairman of the Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT), it is with great pride that I present our 2024 annual report. This document not only details our progress but also serves as a testament to the remarkable achievements made possible by the unwavering support of our partners.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed supporters for their crucial investments in the University's research and innovation. This funding has empowered our dedicated researchers to push the boundaries of knowledge, leading to tangible breakthroughs in fields as diverse as sustainable energy, public health, and cultural heritage. The impact of this work is felt far beyond our campus, contributing directly to the well-being and prosperity of our nation.

However, as we celebrate these successes, we must also recognize the significant opportunities that remain just beyond our reach. The global research landscape is highly competitive, and to maintain our standing and continue to address Malta's most pressing challenges, we need to scale up our efforts. Our researchers have ambitious projects in the pipeline—from developing novel medical technologies to creating resilient solutions for climate change—that are currently constrained by limited resources.

To truly unlock the University of Malta's full potential as a driver of national progress, we urgently require increased investment. We appeal to the Government to elevate research funding as a national priority, and to our philanthropic partners to join us in a deeper collaboration. Your increased commitment will not only accelerate groundbreaking discovery but will also solidify Malta's position as a hub of innovation and excellence.

Let us work together to build a legacy of knowledge and progress for generations to come. Your continued belief in our mission is an investment in a brighter future for all.



Message from the CEO

The year 2024 proved to be another eventful period for the Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT), marked by significant consolidation and the initiation of promising new ventures. We extend our profound gratitude to all our supporters, both longstanding and new, whose contributions are instrumental in fostering world-class research at the University of Malta. The initiative we commenced in 2011 has now reached a crucial stage of maturity, witnessing increasing engagement from various sectors of Maltese society in this noble cause.

The year commenced with a prestigious collaboration with Din l-Art Helwa, Malta’s National Trust. This partnership aims to attract financial support for projects jointly undertaken by the University of Malta and Din l-Art Helwa. The inaugural project under this collaboration focuses on the conservation of the medieval Church of the Annunciation in the hamlet of Hal Millieri. This vital conservation effort is being carried out by the Department of Conservation and Built Heritage within the Faculty of the Built Environment.

On the health sciences front, the RIDT successfully secured additional funding from our steadfast supporters: LifeCycle Foundation, the ALIVE Foundation, Europa Donna Malta, and Beating Hearts Malta. These organizations have been pivotal partners for several years, providing crucial financing for numerous projects, including PhD scholarships.

In 2024, we also awarded the second Hili Ventures PhD scholarship in Child and Family-centred care, building on the success of the first scholarship which is already well underway. We anticipate soon announcing both the third and fourth scholarships within this highly successful collaboration.

This report also features testimonials from PhD students who have greatly benefited from our travel grants. Launched in 2023, this scheme has become exceptionally popular among our doctoral students, enabling them to present their research findings at international conferences. We are exceedingly pleased with the success of this scheme, which is generously financed through the University of Malta Staff Payroll Scheme.

All these achievements are directly attributable to the exceptional generosity of our community. Words alone cannot fully express our appreciation to every supporter who has embraced our invitation to contribute to the vital research undertaken at the University of Malta. To those who have been with us since our inception, and to those who have recently joined our mission, we extend our sincerest gratitude.



Wilfred Kenely
Chief Executive Officer, RIDT

Editorial

The Role of Philanthropy in University Research

The philanthropic landscape in Malta has changed significantly over the past few decades. In the past, giving was almost exclusively tied to charitable institutions like orphanages and missions, with the primary goal of helping “those less fortunate than us”. As the economy and society evolved, new needs emerged, and the profile of philanthropy beneficiaries shifted.

A new trend emerged with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which became a popular concept for companies looking to give back to society. There has been extensive discussion about the importance of CSR, which has been used for various causes, from supporting athletes and restoring historical monuments, to building hospitals and schools in third world countries, and running campaigns on sustainable water usage. Many companies and corporations have been praised for professionalizing CSR and bringing about meaningful societal changes.

A new trend in philanthropy and CSR emerged in Malta with the establishment of the Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT) at the University of Malta in 2011. Over the past fourteen years, a growing number of companies and NGOs have started directing their philanthropic efforts toward research areas that were not previously a focus for philanthropy.

This annual report shows a wide range of donors from various sectors who have recognized the immense value of donating to research. Examples of this new model of giving include:

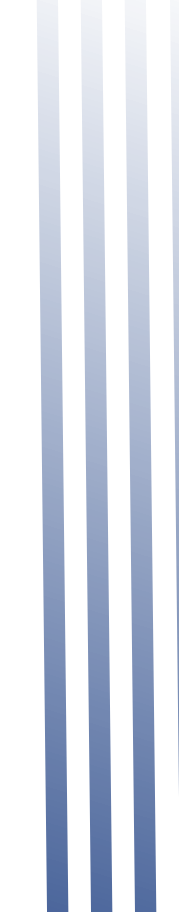
- A growing number of doctoral students are able to continue their studies thanks to PhD scholarships provided by corporate donors.
- Individuals are contributing monthly to the cause directly from their salaries.
- Athletes are performing extreme challenges year after year to raise substantial funds for medical research.
- NGOs raising hundreds of thousands of euro to support research projects

This new model demonstrates how society can help find solutions to its current challenges, as research is fundamentally an investment in solutions, people, and the economy.

With a history spanning over 400 years, the University of Malta has a reputation for producing

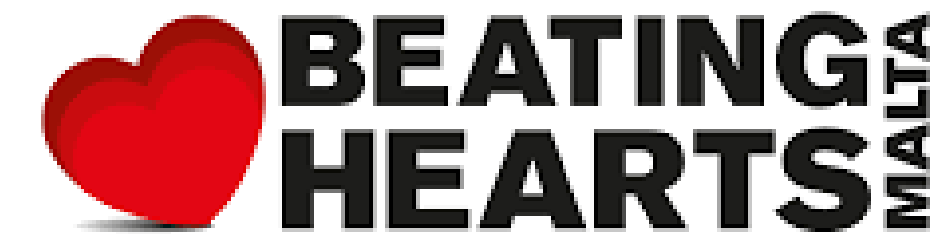
the country’s best minds. It has endured through wars, colonial rule, and political maneuvering across centuries, and continues to serve a growing population. Today, it is also home to thousands of international students and is a hub for world-class research, serving as a key reference point for industry and economic drivers. Research is an expensive activity and the University of Malta continues to keep attracting much-needed funds from various local and international sources. The funds coming through the RIDT, albeit far from sufficient, contribute significantly to the growing research activities across the board.

It is crucial for society to continue supporting the university’s research efforts. The trend set by a growing number of companies, NGOs, and individuals needs to expand to have a greater impact on society. When considering philanthropy, it is time to think about the legacy we want to leave and how that legacy will impact the future.



Research in every heartbeat

Beating Hearts Malta (BHM) is reshaping the future of cardiovascular care by funding cutting-edge research in Malta. Their recent €60,000 donation to the University of Malta's RIDT marks a pivotal moment in the organisation's expanding mission.



When **Beating Hearts Malta** was founded in 2011, its purpose was clear: to support parents and families navigating the complex and emotionally demanding world of congenital heart defects (CHD).

What began as a platform for sharing experiences and practical advice has now evolved into a national force behind cardiovascular research. The organisation's €60,000 donation to the University of Malta's Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT) signals a major step forward in that transformation.

Dr Maryanne Caruana, consultant cardiologist at Mater Dei Hospital and current President of Beating Hearts Malta and Coordinator Katrina Aquilina, whose second child was born with a major heart defect, explained that BHM started off as a support group for patients with congenital heart disease and their families.

Over time, as its visibility and donations increased, BHM started to diversify its work while always keeping patients with congenital and other forms of heart disease at the heart of its initiatives.

The organisation's recent financial support to RIDT - €30,000 each for two innovative cardiovascular research projects - underscores this commitment to a future built on evidence-based care.

"Research is the behind-the-scenes of the treatment and interventions we offer to patients living with congenital heart disease and any other medical condition," they explained. "In supporting research for heart disease, Beating Hearts Malta has been helping in furthering the knowledge on heart conditions and improving the quality of the treatment our patients can receive."

One of the projects funded through RIDT, led by Dr Vanessa Petroni Magri from the Department of Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics, aims to address an increasingly urgent problem in modern medicine: cardiotoxicity caused by cancer treatments. The research will test novel chemotherapeutic agents on laboratory-grown heart models to better understand how to target cancer cells without damaging cardiac tissue.

The second project - CAIRED (Cardiovascular Artificial Intelligence: e-Health for Diabetes) - spearheaded by Dr Kenneth Scerri from the Department of

Systems and Control Engineering, leverages artificial intelligence and wearable technology to predict cardiovascular disease by analysing smart watch data and single-lead ECG readings.

The project hopes to deliver real-time, user-friendly risk assessments to individuals before symptoms even appear.

What sets CAIRED apart is its commitment to explainable AI. Rather than simply providing a risk score, the models are designed to highlight specific patterns or anomalies in the ECG data that contributed to the result. This level of transparency builds trust and enhances clinical utility, allowing both users and healthcare professionals to understand not just the *what*, but also the *why* behind a diagnosis.

The project envisions a scenario where individuals, especially those at higher risk, such as people with diabetes, can take a quick ECG reading using their smartwatch, have it analysed instantly by an AI model on their smartphone, and receive a clear, understandable report about their heart health. This report can even be shared directly with a doctor, allowing for timely follow-up and support.

Over time, this proactive stance could lead to a measurable reduction in hospitalisations, chronic disease management costs, and long-term complications associated with late-stage diagnosis.



Dr Maryanne Caruana & Ms Katrina Aquilina
Photo by L-Università ta' Malta

“Without their support, this project would not have moved beyond the idea stage,” one of Dr Scerri’s colleague Dr Liam Butler says. “It is because of their investment and their vision were we able to take a bold and innovative concept using AI and wearable ECG technology to predict heart disease risk and turn it into functioning research. Their support enabled us to recruit the necessary expertise, access

key datasets, and begin developing our AI models, all of which laid the foundation for real-world innovation.”

Beyond the financial impact, the donation symbolises a partnership rooted in shared purpose: improving cardiovascular health outcomes in Malta through innovation.

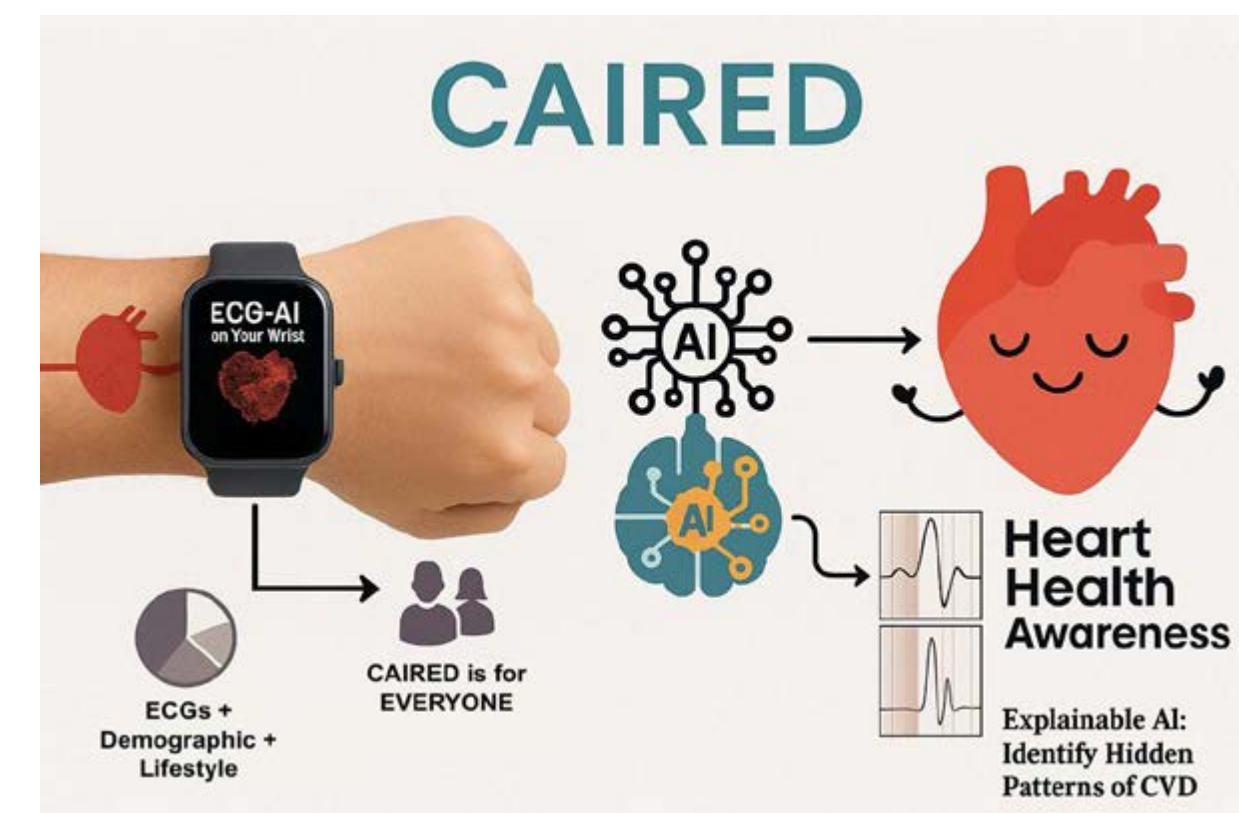
Ms Aquilina says the decision to support both projects was due to the fact that they are firm believers in the importance of research.

“Initially we stipulated an amount based on one project as we did not think there would be more than one eligible candidate, but when we realised that there were two very interesting projects, the board unanimously agreed that we should fund both,” she said. “Given that the RIDT forms part of the University of Malta, we believe that it has the widest reach in identifying the most suitable projects to fund. We also know that we can rely on the integrity of this platform, given that the board is made up of various professionals from different fields and the selection process is very transparent.”

Looking ahead, Beating Hearts Malta is determined to continue its dual mission: supporting families on the ground while shaping the science that determines future standards of care.

“To date, BHM has funded or part-funded three research projects, but we are keen to continue to explore this area further should there be more interest in research in the area of CHD,” Dr Caruana and Ms Aquilina concluded.

[Click here to find out more about Beating Hearts Malta](#)



Dr Vanessa Petroni Magri (Left) & Dr Kenneth Scerri (Right)
Photo by L-Università ta' Malta

Hili Ventures PhD Scholarships

Child and Family Centred Care

With the support of the Research, Innovation & Development Trust (RIDT) and Hili Ventures, Emily Galea is conducting groundbreaking research to help prevent femicide in Malta. Her PhD, rooted in action research and driven by passion, aims to amplify the voices of affected families and influence meaningful policy change.

The Hili Ventures PhD Scholarship – of which Emily Galea is a current beneficiary – stands as a model of how corporate philanthropy can meaningfully intersect with academic inquiry.

“Through a three-year agreement with the Research Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT), Hili Ventures is investing €120,000 to support doctoral research focused on family well-being and community impact,” explains Martin Xuereb, Director of Business Development at Hili Ventures. “This collaboration empowers PHD students whose work explores complex social issues and has the potential to deliver long-term societal benefits in Malta.”

Originally envisioned as support for two to three doctoral candidates, this collaboration has since expanded to four scholarships in the field of ‘Child and Family Centred Care’ – a theme carefully selected by Hili Ventures.

This bespoke model of sponsorship, in which the area of study is aligned with the company’s own values, has not only enabled groundbreaking research, but is now being used by RIDT as a template for similar partnerships with other

corporate stakeholders.

These strategic alliances go beyond financial support, as they create enduring legacies which makes research truly sustainable.

Among the current scholarship recipients is Emily Galea, a full-time PhD candidate whose study, Femicide Fatality Reviews in Malta: An Action Research Study, examines how evidence and lived experience can inform policy development around gender-based violence, and is expected to be completed by January 2027.

Emily’s PhD is a bold, proactive move to dissect systemic failures, amplify survivor voices, and ultimately, prevent future tragedies.

Her work is being carried out in collaboration with the Malta Observatory on Femicide (MOF), which assigns the cases to be reviewed and acts as a gatekeeper to the victims’ networks.

“The purpose of my PhD is to create a specialised femicide fatality review system for Malta, as well as to conduct a select amount of those reviews during the study,” Emily explains. “This involves interviewing the stakeholders of the cases in

question, such as the families of the femicide victims, social workers, police, healthcare workers, and anyone who had contact with the victim leading up to the femicide.”

It was through a university email that Emily discovered the Hili Ventures Scholarship, and she didn’t hesitate. “Scholarships of this nature are hard to come by,” she says, “which is why I immediately began working on my application.”

For Emily, receiving the scholarship has been transformative on multiple levels.

“This scholarship truly means the world to me in that it has allowed me to be completely immersed in what I am passionate about,” she says. “On a professional level, it means giving this study and issue the attention and care that it requires. Additionally, it may contribute to policy reform, and most importantly, the increased protection of women and families via the prevention of femicide.”

She also says that the scholarship has allowed her to pursue opportunities that would not have been otherwise possible, such as presenting at international conferences, and spending a



Emily Galea (PhD Student)
Photo by L-Università ta’ Malta





period of time at a university abroad.

“It has also meant that I can truly spend the required time and focus on this study in order to produce the best outcome,” she notes.

What makes Emily’s research especially powerful is its family-centred perspective – a critical component that aligns with Hili Ventures’ support for research into family-centred care practices.

“Femicide is understood to be the most extreme form of violence against women, and deeply affects families around the world, regardless of background,” she says.

The study addresses systems that protect families and identifies ways in which they can be improved in order to increase that protection. Furthermore, it aims to empower the families of femicide victims by giving them a platform to speak about their experiences in the lead up to the death. This can be both liberating and affirming for those families.

Emily’s chosen methodology is action research – an approach that goes beyond theory and into the realm of social transformation. “It emphasises facilitating social change and addressing societal issues,” she notes. “This is an important part of my doctoral journey and why I chose to pursue it.”

As a teenager, Emily was moved by social justice, particularly issues surrounding sexism and gender-based violence. But it was her role as communications officer for FEM-United project which brought the issue of femicide into sharp focus.

“I learnt the gravity of the situation and its urgency,”

she says. “In this time, I was deeply inspired by the work of Prof. Marceline Naudi – now my supervisor – who has significantly contributed to the field of femicide prevention research and activism, and whose drive and empathy are immeasurable.”

With interdisciplinary threads spanning gender studies, criminology, sociology, policy and law, Emily’s work is inherently complex – but she is guided by the expertise of a diverse supervisory team: Prof. Naudi from the gender and sexualities department, and Prof. Catia Pondeira from criminology.

Asked about the long-term impact she envisions, Emily says that she truly believes that the outcomes of her PhD could contribute to the prevention of femicide in a real and practical way.

“I also believe that the study can empower families who have endured the femicide of one of their relatives, in that they are given an opportunity to speak about their experiences with the system,” she says, “Similarly, participants who work in the system may also consider the study as an opportunity to improve their resources and thus help victims better.”

For early-career researchers and students considering applying for such scholarships, Emily has one essential piece of advice:

“I would say the most important thing is to show a clear research plan that is understandable to any audience,” she states. “I also believe that it is important to communicate your passion and drive, and to create a narrative about your vision for the future and academic journey.”



The Research Projects Shaping Malta's Future Conservation Professionals

Thanks to vital financial support from the Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT), two of Malta's culturally significant sites – the Church of the Annunciation at Hal Millieri and the Nymphaeum at the Argotti Botanical Gardens – are receiving expert-led conservation whilst also training future conservators.

Two exceptional conservation projects are currently underway led by the Department of Conservation and Built Heritage within the University of Malta's Faculty for the Built Environment – the preservation of the medieval wall paintings in the Hal Millieri Church (l/o Zurrieq) and the restoration of the elaborate decorated Baroque Nymphaeum at the Argotti Botanical Gardens (Floriana).

According to Professor JoAnn Cassar, Head of the Department of Conservation and Built Heritage and Jennifer Porter, Assistant Lecturer at the Faculty for the Built Environment and the projects' coordinator, neither initiative would have been possible without the funding and commitment of the Research, Innovation and Development Trust which, not for the first time, has supported professional and didactic conservation projects.

The Hal Millieri project, launched in January 2024, is a collaboration between the RIDT and Din l-Art Ħelwa – a partnership that underscores the importance of combining academic expertise with civic commitment.

At the heart of the project is the conservation of the church's unique medieval wall paintings, which, although they have a long history of studies and interventions, had not been thoroughly assessed since the early 2000s.

"Working as a Department and with our students, and also

based on a sustained interest in this unique site over the years, we had noticed that there were signs of ongoing deterioration," explains Ms Porter. "Although some analysis had already been done, we are now looking much more closely at what is really needed from a conservation point of view."

The focus of the current work lies in the preservation of the wall paintings, which have suffered due to environmental conditions and some of the past conservation approaches, which are currently also being assessed.

"Looking at the decisions taken in the past with hindsight and new knowledge and modern ethical frameworks, we realise that some were correct, and others were not, as conservation thinking was different then," says Prof. Cassar. "Unfortunately, two of the paintings, and a dado pattern, were detached, backed, and returned to the wall in a way that would not be acceptable practice today. Although these actions are now considered to be unacceptable, they are in fact reflective of a now long-discarded methodology."

Ms Porter, who leads the academic, student and professional teams on the ground, remarks that the project has been ongoing for over a year, with weekly visits to the site.

"Two students, and departmental staff, are working at the site, and we're currently assessing the situation and documenting



Photos by Jennifer Porter



how the previous treatments are holding up. Based on our findings, we'll propose what needs to be done next."

The involvement of students is a crucial aspect of this initiative. "We involve our students a lot - it's not just about theory," adds Prof. Cassar. "They do a lot of the groundwork, but of course we also have conservation experts on site. We want to give the students a real experience."

This methodology has been in place since the department launched its conservation courses over 10 years ago. Other high-profile

projects supported by RIDT include the conservation of the Pérez D'Aleccio Great Siege wall paintings in the Throne Room of the Palace in Valletta, undertaken in collaboration with Heritage Malta.

The project to conserve the Hal Millieri wall paintings continues with this trend; the wall paintings are highly significant as some of the best surviving paintings from the pre-Knights period in Malta, and it is a privilege for students and staff to be entrusted with their conservation.

The RIDT has recently informed the Department that the funding of the project is imminent, which will allow for the employment of professional conservators. This will accelerate the work on site and make time for the academic staff to develop research themes around the technique and conservation of the paintings, besides carrying out the necessary conservation work itself.

A second, equally ambitious project is the conservation of the Nymphaeum at the Argotti Botanical Gardens - one of Malta's best surviving examples of Baroque garden architecture, which is also under the care of the University of Malta. It is a piece of artistic heritage, with inner walls and dome elaborately decorated with mosaics, coral, shell, and hand-painted majolica tiles on the floor.

With a generous €300,000 sponsorship through RIDT from the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), this once-neglected structure is now the focus of a three-year, multi-phase project.

"The Nymphaeum has been open to the elements for decades," says Porter. "It was never designed to be a sealed building, so conservation is especially challenging."

The interior mosaics, featuring the coat of arms of Knight Argote y Guzmán, are particularly vulnerable.

"Our main focus is on the mosaics, but we have to consider the building as a whole. There's water infiltration, plaster damage, and general deterioration of the stone," Ms Porter adds.



Thanks to RIDT's support, the Faculty has been able to employ two full-time Research Support Officers, who began by consolidating all historical research.

"We received the funding in November, and from there, we moved into the first phase: compiling all the data collected about the site since the 1990s, its history and environment, and the causes of deterioration. This helps us understand what conservation work is required and what equipment will be necessary to treat the mosaics during subsequent phases of the project," says Ms Porter.

As the reader can appreciate, these steps are necessary and fundamental for any conservation project.

The three-year plan is methodical: the first year is dedicated to research and design of treatment strategies, the second year will tackle external interventions such as roof repairs, and the third year will focus on the final treatment of the mosaics.

Prof. Cassar notes the shift RIDT funding has made possible. "Before, students had written numerous dissertations about the Nymphaeum, which are proving to be an extremely valuable source of information, but no conservation work could be carried out. This funding has allowed us to employ professional conservators and move forward in a structured, impactful way."

The team is also working closely with the Restoration and Preservation Department of the Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government, as well as the University of Malta Argotti Botanic Gardens & Resource Centre. Additional collaboration is underway with the Faculty of Social Wellbeing to help plan how best to present the Nymphaeum to the public.

Students are deeply involved in the project, gaining experience that will shape their future careers.

"These projects give students real-world exposure," says Prof. Cassar. "And there is an international dimension too - Jennifer is from the US, and we have other staff and students from Italy, Poland, and Palestine, as well as Malta of course, working with us." In the past they have also had students and interns from Canada, the Ukraine, UK, and the Netherlands.

Through RIDT's sustained involvement, these two projects do not merely preserve our heritage, but revive history, connect communities, and train the next generation of conservation professionals.

"We are building more than conservation projects," concludes Prof. Cassar. "We're building a legacy - and without the support of RIDT's and our sponsors, as well as the wider conservation and heritage communities, this legacy simply would not be possible."

Din L-Art Helwa and the Research, Innovation & Development Trust (RIDT) - Prestigious Collaboration

On 25 January 2024, **Din I-Art Helwa** and the **Research, Innovation and Development Trust of the University of Malta (RIDT)** signed a Memorandum Of Understanding to set up a collaboration between the two entities to raise funds for various projects which would involve different Departments from the University Of Malta.

Among the departments to be involved in such projects, there will be the Department of Conservation and Built Heritage and the Department of Classics and Archeology. However the MOU is not exclusive to these departments and may involve other collaborations depending on the needs of the projects.

Over the past years, both entities have managed to raise funds for specific projects. Din I-Art Helwa, founded in 1965, has restored and managed numerous cultural sights of historic and environmental importance. The RIDT, founded in 2011, has funded various research projects across all areas of study within the University of Malta. With this collaboration, the two entities will be joining their forces to finance projects of mutual interest.

The Memorandum of Understanding will cover a period of five years.

“Din I-Art Helwa has always sought the highest scientific standards in its conservation projects; this collaboration allows us to raise funds to tap into the best science in the University,” Din I-Art Helwa executive president Alex Torpiano said.

“This is a prestigious collaboration and it is an honour for RIDT to work with Din I-Art Helwa, Malta’s national trust, towards the safeguarding of our heritage,” Wilfred Kenely (CEO – RIDT)



*Prof Alex Torpiano, Ms Simone Mizzi, Prof Alfred Vella (Rector UM), Wilfred Kenely (CEO RIDT)
Photo by L-Università ta' Malta*



LifeCycle Foundation

Pedalling for a Purpose

From extreme endurance events to pioneering genetic research, Alan Curry's LifeCycle Foundation is rewriting the future of renal healthcare in Malta. With nearly €4 million raised and a legacy of bold vision and compassion, the Foundation's story is one of grit and growth.

When Alan Curry launched the LifeCycle Challenge in 1999, he was not simple organising an ambitious endurance event. He was laying the groundwork for what would become one of Malta's most impactful charitable movements.

Now, more than two decades later, the LifeCycle Malta Foundation has raised almost €4 million to support patients suffering from end-stage renal disease, while continuing to break boundaries in medical research, patient support, and public awareness.

Curry, a charismatic and driven figure who still serves as Chairman of the Foundation, remains the cornerstone of LifeCycle's mission. Under his leadership, the Foundation has grown from a one-off charity ride to a multi-faceted institution, supporting everything from vital dialysis equipment to cutting-edge genetic research in partnership with the University of Malta.

This year, LifeCycle's donation of €25,000 to the University's Research Innovation and

Development Trust (RIDT) brings its total contribution to €295,000 since 2014.

But as Alan makes clear, their journey is far from over.

For Alan, the pivot toward research was both a natural evolution and a strategic decision.

"It was obvious from the very start of LifeCycle that buying life-saving equipment was all very well, but trying to seek the root of the problem and trying to prevent this chronic disease occurring in the first place was paramount," he says.

This shift came into sharper focus in 2014, when the Foundation began supporting the University of Malta's research into renal disease.

Collaborating closely with Professors Emanuel Farrugia and Edith Said - leading experts in the field - LifeCycle helped pioneer a local research programme with a global vision: to understand, diagnose, and potentially prevent renal disease through the lens of genetic science.

The current research, funded through RIDT and led by Professors Farrugia and Said, focuses on autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD), the most common inherited kidney disorder in Malta.

The work has already yielded a genetic diagnostic profile tailored specifically to the Maltese population, making early diagnosis and risk prediction a tangible possibility.

Alan is quick to deflect credit for this scientific progress, but his conviction in supporting the right people and the right strategy is unwavering.

"We as LifeCycle aren't experts in renal disease," he says candidly, "but as soon as those experts came on board, then genetic research was the way forward. As the saying goes, 'don't walk into a gunfight holding a kitchen knife.'"

What makes LifeCycle unique is not only the breadth of its mission but how that mission is powered.

The Foundation's annual LifeCycle Challenge is one of the most gruelling endurance events in Europe, with cyclists covering an astonishing 2,000 kilometres in just 10 days.

In 2024, the team braved the terrain of Botswana to the Cape of Good Hope. In 2025, they will traverse Jordan and Saudi Arabia, from Petra to Jeddah.

"The philosophy from the very conception has never changed," Alan explains. "Find a challenge extreme enough to attract both participants and the media, and that in

[Click here to watch the film Blood, Sweat and Gears](#)

turn will attract companies as well as individuals to sponsor or donate to the cause.”

Beyond funding, the event draws attention to the invisible battle faced by renal patients, many of whom must undergo dialysis multiple times a week just to survive.

“We will continue to show those patients that we are willing to suffer for those few days to show unity with their daily suffering. This year we have five of Malta’s finest – and fittest – doctors taking part as cyclists, and another joining as support,” Alan notes proudly. “That speaks volumes.”

LifeCycle’s support extends well beyond research. Working closely with Paul Calleja, head nurse of the Renal Unit, the Foundation draws up a ‘wish list’ every year to prioritise funding for essential services and equipment.

Initiatives include the TRACCIA software support system, which enhances the success rate of kidney transplants by better matching donors and recipients.

There is also the RUSH Initiative (Renal Unit Support Health Hub), which offers psychological counselling, physical education, and soon, dietary support to address obesity, diabetes, and

hypertension – all precursors to renal failure.

“We are holistic in our support,” Alan emphasises. “Renal failure affects every part of a patient’s life.”

Indeed, the Foundation has previously funded everything from new dialysis couches to a dedicated patient transport van and even an annual pilgrimage to Lourdes for kidney patients.

Alan credits LifeCycle’s longevity and success to its supporters.

“Without the support from sponsors and the general public, we simply wouldn’t exist,” he says. “After 26 years and being trailblazers for such events, our reputation has stood the test of time.”

That spirit of community has also taken root in LifeCycle’s second major initiative: the LifeWalk Challenge. This annual trek along Hadrian’s Wall in the UK offers a more accessible yet equally impactful way to support the cause. Participants walk 135km in just four days, raising funds while experiencing the British countryside in solidarity with kidney patients.

At the heart of LifeCycle’s ongoing evolution is its partnership with the University of Malta and RIDT. Through consistent annual donations, the Foundation has played a key role in establishing Malta as a serious player in kidney research.

The University’s Kidney Research Programme now includes a dedicated biobank and a growing portfolio of studies into congenital kidney disease and diabetic nephropathy.

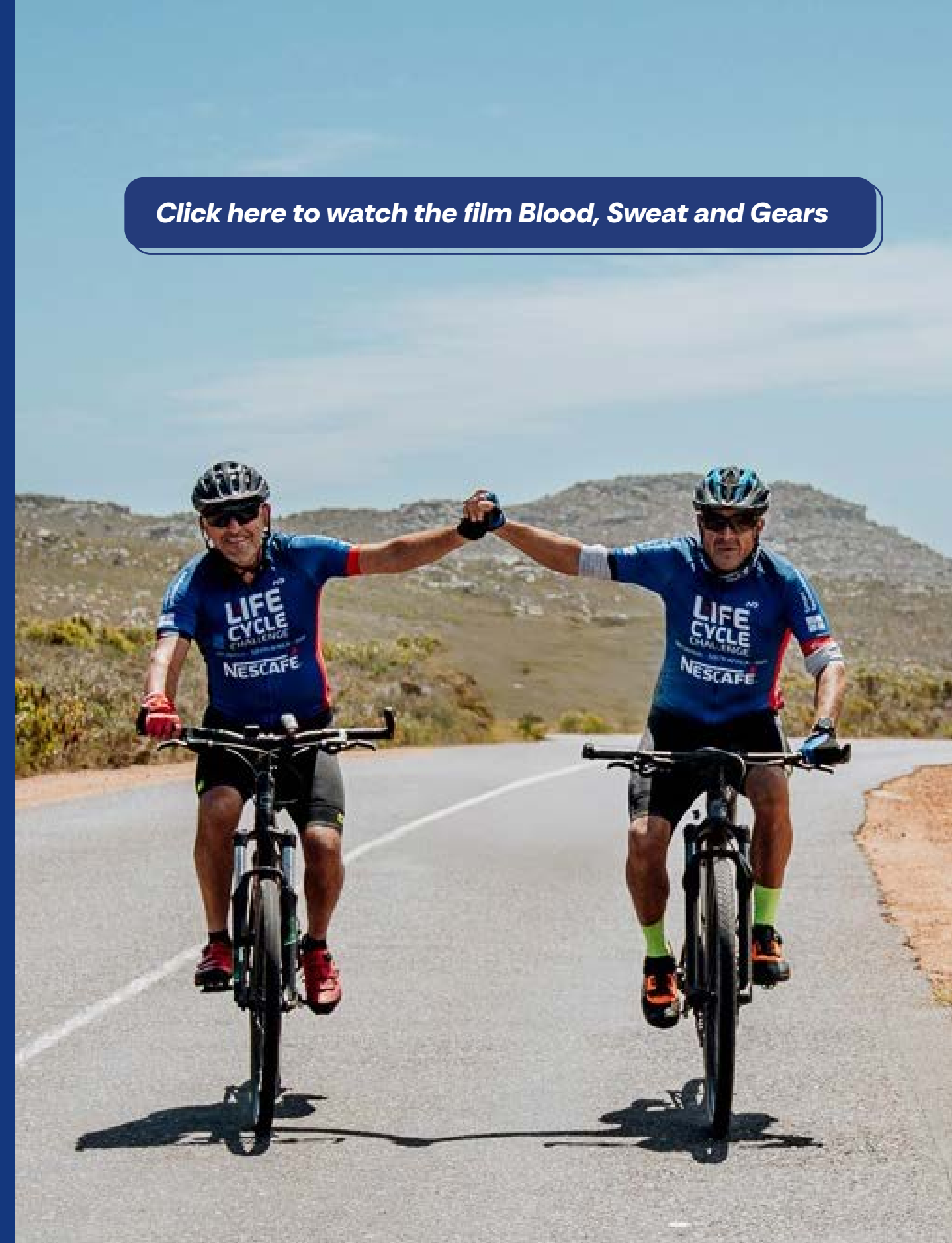
The ultimate goal is to develop a reliable genetic diagnostic profile specifically tailored to the Maltese population – one that could revolutionise how local doctors diagnose and manage kidney disease and potentially delay or even prevent its progression in high-risk individuals.

The funded research has also explored other pressing renal conditions, including congenital kidney disorders and diabetic nephropathy, both of which are on the rise globally.

According to Prof. Alfred J. Vella, Rector of the University, the support from LifeCycle has allowed the research team to build a solid foundation for translational science, bridging laboratory findings with clinical applications.

In essence, LifeCycle’s commitment is not just an investment in science, but a lifeline for current and future generations of renal patients in Malta.

“Our aim is as always to support over 300 patients whose lives have been turned upside down by this terrible disease, Alan says, “We are the only charity in Malta who supports renal patients in such a comprehensive way.”



Europa Donna Malta: A Steadfast Partner in Advancing Breast Cancer Research

The Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT) is immensely proud to highlight the enduring and invaluable partnership with Europa Donna Malta. Their unwavering commitment to supporting breast cancer research at the University of Malta has been a cornerstone in this critical area, fostering vital scientific research.

Europa Donna Malta, a dedicated NGO advocating for the rights and needs of women affected by breast cancer, has consistently demonstrated its profound dedication through regular and generous donations to RIDT. These contributions are directly channelled into groundbreaking research initiatives undertaken by scientists and medical professionals at the University of Malta. Such sustained support is fundamental, providing the necessary resources for studies that aim to improve understanding, diagnosis, and treatment of breast cancer, ultimately enhancing patient outcomes and quality of life.

The year 2024 marked a significant milestone in this impactful collaboration.

Building upon their long-standing generosity, Europa Donna Malta and RIDT proudly signed a new agreement, further solidifying their shared vision for a future free from the threat of breast cancer. This latest agreement specifically pledges support for a second PhD scholarship in Breast Cancer Research. This dedicated scholarship will empower an aspiring young researcher to pursue in-depth, cutting-edge studies in this field, contributing fresh perspectives and innovative methodologies to the global fight against breast cancer.

The provision of such scholarships is vital. It not only nurtures the next generation of scientific talent but also ensures a continuous pipeline of dedicated individuals

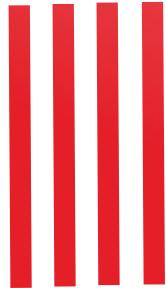
committed to unravelling the complexities of this disease. By investing in a PhD scholarship, Europa Donna Malta is directly contributing to building research capacity within Malta, ensuring that the University of Malta remains at the forefront of medical discovery.

RIDT extends its deepest gratitude to Europa Donna Malta for their consistent generosity and their profound dedication to this cause. Their contributions are not just financial; they represent a powerful belief in the transformative power of research and a tangible commitment to improving the lives of countless individuals and families affected by breast cancer in Malta and beyond.



Europa Donna Malta team at annual Hilda Schembri Memorial Lecture

[Click here to find out more about Europa Donna Malta](#)



ALIVE Charity Foundation - A Cancer Research Movement

It is hard to believe that a bike ride back in 2013 would lead to the founding of the ALIVE Charity Foundation, Malta's first NGO dedicated solely to funding cancer research.

Since its inception, the ALIVE Charity Foundation has consistently directed funds toward impactful and carefully selected initiatives. These include €135,000 for breast cancer research, €170,000 for children's cancer studies, and €80,000 for the development of a recreational area for young patients at the Sir Anthony Mamo Oncology Centre.

Between 2019 and 2021 alone, ALIVE donated €227,000 to support seven projects in cancer research at the University of Malta. A substantial amount of the money donated by ALIVE towards cancer research, went towards the financing of PhD scholarships.

A trusted partner in this mission has been the Research, Innovation & Development Trust (RIDT), which plays a crucial role in channeling and overseeing the application of these funds.

RIDT has helped turn ALIVE's donations into tangible impact, enabling researchers to explore cancer biology, develop more effective treatments, and strengthen early detection capabilities.

Central to ALIVE's fundraising model is the ALIVE Cycling

Challenge for Cancer, a now-iconic annual event that combines endurance, advocacy, and philanthropy. Over the years, hundreds of cyclists have taken part, riding across European countries in multi-day challenges that test their limits and raise awareness for the cause.

More than merely a fundraising tool, the Cycling Challenge promotes physical health, mental resilience, and community spirit. It also gives the Foundation a platform to talk about cancer prevention, early screening, and the vital importance of research.

Even during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when most events ground to a halt, ALIVE adapted and pressed on. The Foundation raised €90,000 in 2022, followed by €120,000 in 2023 and €100,000 in 2024. The ALIVE Charity Foundation and RIDT look enthusiastically forward towards the one million euro target which should be reached in 2025.

With over a decade of credibility behind them and a growing network of corporate sponsors, volunteers, and supporters, the Foundation has grown into one of the island's most impactful philanthropic initiatives.



Photo by ALIVE Charity Foundation



Nicky Camilleri

Honoris Causa

What began as a spirited initiative to combine fitness with fundraising has since transformed into one of Malta's most influential philanthropic movements in medical research.

The ALIVE Charity Foundation, founded by Nicky Camilleri and Elton Barry, has to date channeled over €920,000 into cancer research projects through a trusted partnership with the Research, Innovation & Development Trust (RIDT) at the University of Malta.

"We were driven by a simple but powerful idea: to channel our energy and passion for sport – particularly cycling – into a cause that could create real, lasting change," recalls Mr Camilleri. "Cancer touches so many lives, including those close to our own. Yet we realised that Malta lacked dedicated funding for cancer research. We wanted to be pioneers in changing that. Our goal was to fund local research that could not only improve treatment options here but also contribute to the global fight against cancer."



Nicky Camilleri – Honoris Causa
Photo by L-Università ta' Malta

The significance of this work was formally recognised in 2024 when Nicky Camilleri was awarded a Master of Letters *Honoris Causa* by the University of Malta.

"It was truly a humbling and emotional moment," Mr Camilleri reflects. "This honour isn't just about me – it's a recognition of the tireless efforts of everyone involved with ALIVE, from our cyclists and volunteers to our sponsors and donors. It affirms that civil society can play a vital role in advancing medical research and public health. I accepted the award with gratitude and on behalf of every person who has believed in this cause."

The Foundation's latest donation of €100,000 to the RIDT in 2024 will be distributed across three pivotal areas: early diagnosis, novel treatment strategies, and post-treatment care.

Part of the funds will support promising PhD and post-doctoral research with strong potential for clinical application.

With their €1 million fundraising milestone within reach, ALIVE is preparing to scale its impact.

"Reaching €1 million is a symbolic and deeply motivating milestone," Mr Camilleri says. "But it's just the beginning. We plan to diversify our fundraising initiatives, deepen our collaborations with researchers, and continue promoting a culture of healthy living and civic responsibility. We also want to inspire the next generation to get involved and carry this legacy forward."

He says that their message is simple: medical research saves lives, and local research ensures that the solutions are tailored for our people.

"Malta has the talent and the drive – we just need the sustained support," he asserts. "Every euro donated is an investment in our own future, in our children's health, and in a society where innovation and compassion go hand in hand. Let's continue building a legacy of hope, progress, and care."

[Click here to find out more about ALIVE Charity Foundation](#)

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Testimonials

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Dr Maryanne Caruana
Chairperson, Beating Hearts Malta

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The transformative power of knowledge

Choosing to support research at the University of Malta through the Research, Innovation & Development Trust (RIDT) was a decision rooted in the belief of the board of Beating Hearts Malta in the transformative power of knowledge. Given that cardiovascular diseases are close to the heart of Beating Hearts Malta, we focused our attention on projects that would help further knowledge on the early diagnosis and management of heart-related conditions.

RIDT offers a transparent and effective platform for channelling support directly to research initiatives that matter. For BHM, supporting research through RIDT is not only an investment in the future of Malta but also in the broader advancement of knowledge and innovation.

We are proud to play a small role in this inspiring journey.

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Testimonials

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APS Bank

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The need to invest in Knowledge and Innovation

Our support for RIDT reflects APS Bank's strong belief in the importance of research as a foundation for a better society. We value initiatives that celebrate Malta's talent while highlighting the need to invest in knowledge and innovation. As a bank with community at its heart, we are proud to stand alongside RIDT in their mission to inspire creativity, advance research, and bring people together.

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Testimonials

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Alan Curry

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The decision to support research at the University of Malta wasn't part of the original plan for the Lifecycle Challenge. When we started in 1999, the goal was simple: raise money for the renal unit staff to thank them for my wife Carmen's care. Coming from a non-academic background, I only thought about getting new equipment or a fresh coat of paint.

Over time, it became clear that simply providing equipment wasn't enough. I began asking about the psychological support for patients and the state of local research. I wanted to know if there were common factors in the increasing number of renal patients and whether something in the Maltese population could be a contributing cause. We needed to look beyond the common risk factors like obesity and diabetes. This line of questioning led to a breakthrough in 2017 when the Lifecycle committee, along with the University of Malta and Mater Dei Hospital, started a research programme.

We decided to allocate a significant portion of our funds to this vital work. The work of Professor Emanuel Farrugia and Professor Edith Said's team fills me with immense pride. Knowing that this small but highly qualified group is making significant progress in understanding the causes of this chronic disease is incredibly rewarding. While we still need to educate the public about preventative measures, the research funded by Lifecycle is helping us get closer to understanding and tackling the root of the problem.

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Supporting Doctoral Journeys: A Glimpse into the Impact of RIDT Travel Grants

The collaborative travel grant programme between the **Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT)** and the **Doctoral School of the University of Malta** is designed to empower our PhD students. By providing crucial funding for travel and conference participation, these grants offer more than just financial assistance—they open doors to international collaboration, critical feedback from global experts, and exposure to cutting-edge research

The following testimonials from four of our PhD students, who benefited from the grants in 2024, offer a first-hand account of how this support has been a catalyst for their academic and professional growth. Their experiences highlight the profound impact of these opportunities on their research, their confidence, and their ability to contribute to their fields on a global stage.



Lian Bonnici

As a fourth-year PhD student at the University of Malta, the RIDT Travel Grant was pivotal in supporting my attendance at the European Wound Management Association (EWMA) Conference, held in London in 2024.

The conference focused on novel treatments and the multidisciplinary management of chronic wounds, bringing together leading clinicians, researchers, and industry experts from across Europe.

With the support of this grant, I had the opportunity to present my research – “The potential of epigenetic modifiers combined with an insect-derived natural product in promoting fibroblast-mediated wound healing”—through a poster presentation.

This experience allowed me not only to share my work but also to receive valuable feedback and engage in insightful discussions about its clinical relevance with international professionals.

Attending EWMA greatly broadened my perspective and challenged me to think more deeply about the practical applications of my research.

One of the most rewarding outcomes of this experience was the establishment of a research collaboration with the University of Tartu. This connection played a key role in the next phase of my project and career.

Attending EWMA significantly enriched my academic journey and helped me grow professionally as an early-career researcher. I am sincerely grateful to RIDT for making this opportunity possible and for supporting young researchers like myself in gaining international exposure and forming impactful collaborations.



Matthew Axisa

I had always aspired to attend EU PVSEC 2024, widely regarded as one of the most prestigious conferences in the field of photovoltaics.

The RIDT travel grant provided an ideal opportunity to ease the financial burden and allowed me to focus fully on delivering my presentation to such a distinguished audience.

With the conference centred on innovation in the global PV solar sector, I had the chance to explore cutting-edge advancements in high-efficiency solar technologies and emerging PV cell materials such as perovskite.

It also offered a valuable platform for engaging with industry leaders and researchers. I was fortunate to engage in discussions with highly esteemed professionals, particularly in my Ph.D. area of thin object shading.

Thanks to RIDT covering a significant portion of the overall cost, I was able to focus completely on the conference experience, not only during my presentation but also through networking and professional development. This exposure to future trends and developments in the field was invaluable.

Being overseas and surrounded by experts from across the globe was both eye-opening and inspiring. I returned with a deeper understanding of solar energy’s global impact and valuable insights into how I can apply this knowledge to strengthen the Maltese photovoltaic sector.



Tiziana Mifsud

In October 2024, I had the opportunity to attend the International Ankle Symposium in Strasbourg, France, thanks to the RIDT Travel Grant. This grant was crucial in enabling my participation in this prestigious global event, which focuses on cutting-edge foot and ankle research and clinical practice.

During the symposium, I presented results from a systematic review and shared findings from an observational study on elastography, an emerging modality for assessing Achilles' tendon stiffness. This experience allowed me to present my work to an international audience, receive valuable feedback, and engage in discussions that significantly enriched my research perspective.

Crucially, this opportunity led to the establishment of a new collaboration with a fellow researcher in the field. This connection opens exciting avenues for joint research and future project development. Attending the symposium also exposed me to the latest advancements in the field, further enhancing my ongoing research and contributing to my professional growth.

I am deeply grateful to RIDT for their support. The Travel Grant was instrumental in facilitating this experience, directly impacting my research trajectory and fostering international connections that will benefit future studies at the University of Malta.



Matthew Grima

The Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT) grant was instrumental in supporting my attendance at the Joint 15th Roman Archaeology Conference / 32nd Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference in London in April 2024.

This opportunity was a pivotal moment for my doctoral research. I presented my study, "Glass trade across centuries: A first archaeometric study of glass from the island of Malta," to an international audience. The experience of having my research critically assessed by peers from around the world provided me with a fresh perspective, especially after six years of working on the project. The positive feedback I received was a huge confidence booster, confirming the validity of my approach, especially coming so soon after publishing preliminary results in the *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*.

Beyond presenting my own work, the conference exposed me to new data mining processes and interpretive frameworks being used in different archaeological contexts. These insights have since enriched my data analysis and interpretation, proving the invaluable nature of attending such global events.

This conference was a crucial milestone for the progress and dissemination of my research. I am immensely grateful to RIDT for providing the support that made this experience possible, directly contributing to the advancement of my work and my professional development.



University of Malta Staff supporting PhD students through Payroll Giving

The Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT) is pleased to highlight the significant contribution made by the **University of Malta staff** through the **Payroll Giving Scheme**. This initiative allows academics, administrative, and technical staff to make regular, voluntary donations directly from their salaries, providing a consistent and reliable source of funding for research at the University.

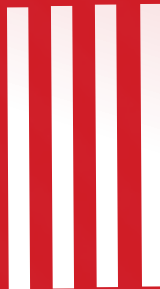
Payroll giving offers a straightforward and effective way for staff members to support the institution’s research mission. By choosing to donate a small, regular amount, staff are directly contributing to the advancement of knowledge across various faculties and departments. These contributions accumulate to provide essential funding for a wide array of research projects, ranging from scientific and medical breakthroughs to humanities and arts initiatives.

In recent years, funds from the **RIDT Payroll Giving Scheme** have been used to support PhD students when they present their research in international and prestigious conferences, seminars and events overseas, through grants which cover a percentage of the costs for such participation.

This collective effort by university staff demonstrates a clear commitment to fostering a vibrant research environment and reinforces the University’s role as a leading research institution in Malta.

RIDT extends its sincere gratitude to all University staff members who participate in the Payroll Giving Scheme. Your consistent support is a fundamental pillar in driving research forward and helps to secure a future shaped by knowledge and innovation.

To find out more on how you too can become a regular payroll giver please go to this link



Alumni Giving Back

Empowering Researchers at the University of Malta

In 2024, RIDT launched a new scheme called the **RIDT Giving Back Campaign**. This campaign addresses **UM Alumni** who now have a successful career and would like to show their appreciation to our Alma Mater through regular donations.

Alumni are being invited to join this powerful initiative designed to make a tangible difference. With a simple monthly donation, conveniently deducted from their payroll, Alumni can contribute to the continued excellence of the University of Malta.

Why Should You Give Back?

Our university is more than just bricks and mortar; it's a vibrant hub of learning, research, discovery, and innovation. Your support, no matter the size, will have a profound impact in several key areas:

Empowering Future Students: Your contributions will provide vital PhD scholarships, grants and resources, opening doors for talented students who might otherwise face financial barriers. You'll be investing in their potential and helping them achieve their dreams.

Fuelling Cutting-Edge Research: The University of Malta is at the forefront of ground-breaking research across diverse fields. Your donations will support these endeavours, driving innovation and contributing to advancements that benefit society as a whole.

Enhancing Campus Facilities: A modern and well-equipped learning environment is essential for academic success. Your support will help us upgrade facilities, create inspiring spaces, and provide students with the resources they need to thrive.

Strengthening Global Reputation: A strong and vibrant University of Malta benefits us all. Your contributions will help us maintain and enhance our global reputation, ensuring that our degrees continue to hold value and open doors worldwide.

A Simple Act of Gratitude, A Powerful Investment in the Future

Giving back is more than just a donation; it's an expression of gratitude for the education and opportunities we received. It's a way to pay it forward and invest in the future of our university and the generations to come.

Ready to Make a Difference?

We've made it easy to join The **RIDT Giving Back Campaign**! Simply send an email to info@ridt.org.mt to find out how you too can be part of this journey. Your ongoing support will make a real and lasting impact.

Christopher Busuttil Delbridge, Ritianne Schembri and Michael Azzopardi are the first persons to join this campaign. They are encouraging their university friends to be part of this campaign and pledge their commitment with RIDT.

You too should reach out to your old friends and make this impact together. 

Contact us now on info@ridt.org.mt and see how you too can be part of the Giving Back Campaign



‘Gratitude is an emotion that I connect to a lot. After 25 years of benefitting from my professional formation at the University of Malta I felt the need to personally give back more. That is why I chose RIDT for my monthly disbursement. It is a small gesture on my part but this seed could become very significant if many contribute. Through the funding of research our beloved Alma Mater can be more prestigious and sustainable.’

– Christopher Busuttil Delbridge



‘As the COO of Evolve Ltd in Malta, I am proud to take the initiative of donating a fraction of my salary to support researchers at the University of Malta. I firmly believe that “true success is not measured by what you achieve for yourself, but by what you do for others.” My passion for continuous improvement drives me to invest in local talent and foster an environment where creativity can thrive. By supporting vital research initiatives, I hope to contribute to ground-breaking advancements that benefit society as a whole and inspire others to join me in making a difference.’

– Ritianne Schembri



‘Twenty-five years after graduating from the University of Malta, I feel privileged to give back to the institution that has shaped my career and my outlook on life. Supporting RIDT is not just about honouring the past, but about investing in the future — in the talent, creativity, and ambition of our next generations. Research and innovation are the engines of progress, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that Malta’s brightest minds have the opportunities and resources to flourish. I believe that by strengthening research today, we are building a foundation for a more resilient, competitive, and inspired tomorrow.’

– Michael Azzopardi

Bridging Research and National Policy

MCESD Engages with University of Malta

The year 2024 saw a significant collaboration aimed at strengthening the ties between Malta’s academic research and national socio-economic policy. The Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD), a crucial consultative body, embarked on an insightful visit to the University of Malta and the Institute for Sustainable Energy (ISE) in Marsaxlokk. This initiative, facilitated by the Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT), underscored the vital role of research and innovation in addressing Malta’s contemporary challenges and shaping its future. The visit served as a powerful platform for MCESD members, representing various social and economic sectors, to gain first-hand exposure to the groundbreaking work being conducted within Malta’s premier academic institution. It highlighted how academic research translates into tangible solutions and informed policy-making, directly contributing to the nation’s progress.

At the Heart of the Academia: The University of Malta

During the visit at the University of Malta, on 26 January 2024, the MCESD delegation engaged with leading researchers across diverse faculties and departments. Discussions focused on a wide array of topics, from cutting-edge scientific discoveries to crucial social and economic studies. An overview of the current number of research projects, PhD students and research support officers, as well as presentations on research in the areas of ESG, Climate Change and Social Wellbeing continued to highlight the significance of the role of the University of Malta towards policy-making.

Through the visit to some of the Engineering and IT labs, the delegates gained a deeper appreciation for the extensive and impactful research ecosystem cultivated at the University, touching upon areas vital for national development and services by the University of Malta to local industries.

Pioneering Sustainability: The Institute for Sustainable Energy in Marsaxlokk

The second visit, on Monday 8 April 2024, took MCESD members to the Institute for Sustainable Energy (ISE), nestled in Marsaxlokk. This visit was particularly pertinent given Malta’s ongoing efforts to transition towards a greener economy and enhance its energy security. The ISE, a beacon of research and development in renewable energy and energy efficiency, demonstrated its pivotal work in areas such as solar energy, wind power, and energy management systems.

The delegation witnessed the practical applications of sustainable energy research, understanding how the Institute’s projects aim to tackle Malta’s unique energy challenges. Discussions revolved around the potential for integrating renewable energy sources into the national grid, developing energy-efficient solutions for buildings, and fostering a culture of sustainability across all sectors. The visit highlighted the ISE’s commitment to providing evidence-based solutions that can inform Malta’s national energy policy and contribute significantly to its environmental targets.

Bridging the Gap: Research, Policy, and National Development

The overarching message from this comprehensive visit was clear: a strong link between robust academic research and pragmatic national policy is indispensable for Malta’s sustainable development. The engagement between MCESD and the University of Malta, including the ISE, reinforced the understanding that investment in research through initiatives like RIDT is not merely an academic pursuit but a strategic national imperative. It ensures that decision-makers are informed by the latest scientific knowledge and innovative solutions, fostering a more resilient, equitable, and prosperous Malta.

RIDT remains committed to facilitating such crucial interactions, believing that by connecting generous donors and the wider community with the transformative power of research, we can collectively build a brighter future for our islands.



Photos by L-Università ta’ Malta

RIDT at Science in the City 2024: Connecting Research with the Community

The Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT) participated in the vibrant **Science in the City festival**, held in Valletta, Malta, in September 2024. This annual event, a cornerstone of Malta's science communication efforts, provided a platform for RIDT to connect the public with the ground breaking research being conducted at the University of Malta.

Science in the City is renowned for transforming Valletta's public spaces into an interactive hub of discovery, making complex scientific concepts accessible and engaging for all ages. RIDT's presence at the festival was crucial in showcasing how philanthropic support directly fuels this vital research.

This year, a key highlight of the RIDT stand was its focus on innovative transport solutions and urban design. In collaboration with **Mizzi Studio**, the RIDT stand presented fascinating insights into a multi-modality transport system for Malta. Visitors were particularly captivated by the 'Malta Bus Revisited' concept, a visionary project that reimagines the island's iconic public transport in a sustainable and forward-thinking way. Through interactive displays, engaging presentations, and direct interactions, visitors had the opportunity to learn about these and other diverse range of projects that RIDT helps to fund.

RIDT's participation highlighted the tangible impact of research on everyday life and underscored the importance of public investment and support. It was inspiring to witness the curiosity and enthusiasm of attendees, particularly young minds, as they engaged with the team and explored different options to transform the current traffic and transport landscape.

RIDT firmly believes that fostering a strong connection between the University of Malta and the general public is essential for a thriving research ecosystem. Events like Science in the City are instrumental in achieving this, allowing RIDT to demonstrate the value of research and inspire the next generation of scientists and innovators.



A Concert for Research: Harmony of Hope 2024

On Friday, 8th November 2024, the **Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT)** in collaboration with **APS Bank**, presented the second edition of Harmony of Hope. This event aimed to bring the community together through music, while raising funds for **Cancer Research** at the **University of Malta**.

The concert featured a number of singers and musicians and served to highlight how music can support a common cause. This was a live concert of pop favourites performed by some of Malta’s top singers and accompanied by the Spiteri Lucas Band, under the direction of Mark Spiteri Lucas. Singers included: Cherylis Camilleri, Dario Bezzina, Debbie Scerri, Eleonor Cassar, Georg Zammit, Ismael Grech, Ivan Spiteri Lucas, Jason Scerri, Krista Spiteri Lucas, Kurt Calleja, Laura Bruno, Lawrence Gray, Marie Claire Cappello, Martina Fenech, Mary Rose Mallia, Michaela Galea, Nicole Vella, Victorio Gauci and Claudette Buttigieg. All the performers gave their heart and soul towards the cause.

The primary goal of Harmony of Hope is to support research initiatives that address various challenges, specifically focusing on Cancer Research. The funds collected from this concert will be channeled into different research projects at the University of Malta, assisting scientists and academics in their work in areas such as diagnostic and therapeutic challenges in the battle against cancer.

RIDT extends its gratitude to all who attended, performed, volunteered, and supported the event. This concert was supported by **Every Day, Cancer Hub Malta, Showshappening.com, the University of Malta, Gordon Borg Urso** and the **Spiteri Lucas Band**.

Photos by David Buttigieg





RIDT Christmas Concert: A Festive Evening at St Dominic's Church, Valletta

The annual RIDT Christmas Concert 2024, held on December 13th at the beautiful St Dominic's Church in Valletta, was a heart-warming celebration that brought together supporters, benefactors, researchers and patrons in the true spirit of the season. The historic venue provided a stunning backdrop for an evening filled with music, joy, and festive cheer.

Featuring a carefully curated programme of traditional carols, contemporary pieces, and classical selections, the concert showcased the exceptional talents of the national choir, Kor Malta, in their impeccable a Capella style. The choir was under the direction of Mro Riccardo Bianchi.

The audience was enthralled and delighted by the extraordinary execution of the choir members and their capability of creating formidable harmonies which showed the technique, talent and skill of each member of the choir, particularly those of Mro Riccardo Bianchi himself.

After the concert, all guests were invited for traditional mince pies and mulled wine in the newly decorated Dominican Museum.



Photos by John Grech

More...

RIDT & Lidl Malta: A Sweet Partnership for Research

Throughout 2024, RIDT engaged in an impactful collaboration with **Lidl Malta**, particularly through the success of the **Christmas Panettone Campaign**. This initiative once again demonstrated how consumer choices can directly contribute to vital research at the University of Malta.

During the festive season, a portion of the proceeds from every panettone sold at Lidl Malta outlets was dedicated to supporting research projects championed by RIDT. This simple yet effective mechanism allowed thousands of shoppers to become direct contributors to research at the University of Malta, often without even realizing the significant impact of their purchase.

The funds raised through this campaign were channelled into diverse research areas at the University, helping to finance innovative studies that address some of Malta’s most pressing challenges. This partnership with Lidl Malta exemplifies a model of corporate social responsibility that seamlessly integrates philanthropy into everyday business operations, making it easy for the public to participate in a meaningful cause.

RIDT extends its sincere gratitude to Lidl Malta for their continued commitment and to all customers who, by choosing Lidl products, helped fuel the spirit of discovery and progress in Malta.



Riċerkaturi: Amplifying University of Malta Research on Air

The year 2024 saw the continued success of **Riċerkaturi**, the radio programme transmitted on Campus 103.7. Hosted and produced by RIDT CEO **Wilfred Kenely**, the programme has become a crucial platform for showcasing the breadth and depth of research being conducted at the University of Malta.

Throughout series 4, 5, and the initial part of Series 6, all transmitted throughout 2024, Riċerkaturi brought listeners closer to the work of University academics and reseachers. Each episode featured a researcher and delved into different research projects, translating complex scientific and academic concepts into accessible and engaging discussions for a broad audience. From medical breakthroughs to environmental studies, technological innovations, and explorations in the humanities, the programme highlighted the diverse ways in which University research is contributing to society.

Riċerkaturi serves a dual purpose: it not only educates the public about ongoing research at the University of Malta but also underscores the critical need for continued investment in research. By giving a voice to the researchers themselves, the programme fosters a deeper appreciation for their dedication and the potential impact of their work on Malta’s future.

RIDT is proud of Riċerkaturi’s role in bridging the gap between academia and the community, inspiring curiosity, and demonstrating the tangible benefits of supporting research.



More...

Wellbee Supermarkets: Loyalty Scheme Fuels Research

The Research, Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT) is pleased to acknowledge the generous support received from **Wellbee Supermarkets** in 2024, made possible through their **customer loyalty scheme**. This initiative provided Wellbee customers with a unique opportunity to contribute to research at the University of Malta with every purchase.

Through the loyalty scheme, Wellbee Supermarkets enabled customers to convert their accumulated loyalty points into donations for RIDT. This seamless mechanism allowed individuals to support vital research efforts simply by doing their regular shopping, transforming everyday transactions into acts of philanthropy.

The funds generated through Wellbee's loyalty scheme are directed towards the extraordinary research on ALS by Prof Ruben Cauchi and his team. This form of corporate giving not only provides crucial financial support but also raises public awareness about the importance of research and encourages broader community engagement.

RIDT extends its sincere appreciation to Wellbee Supermarkets for their commitment to corporate social responsibility and to all their loyal customers whose collective contributions are making a tangible difference in fostering innovation and research in Malta.



Pink October

In 2024, So City Hotel invited hotel guests to contribute towards breast cancer research at the University of Malta through RIDT. The hotel took the opportunity to raise awareness on breast cancer with both their staff and guests. The initiative came from the So City Hotel general manager, Mr Alex.



To Our Valued Supporters and Sponsors,

On behalf of the RIDT, we extend our deepest gratitude for your unwavering support throughout 2024. Your commitment has been instrumental in driving our mission forward, and the progress we've achieved would not have been possible without you.

This past year, we've seen remarkable achievements and reached new milestones, all fuelled by your generosity. Your contributions, whether big or small, have a profound and lasting impact. You are not just donors or sponsors; you are essential partners in our journey.

As we look to the future, we are filled with optimism and renewed determination. We are excited about what we can accomplish together in the coming year and beyond. Your continued support is a source of immense strength and inspiration.

Thank you for believing in our work and for being a part of the RIDT family.

Sincerely,

The RIDT Team

Design & Photos: Marketing, Communications & Alumni Office – University of Malta

Content and Words: Coryse Borg and RIDT.



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