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Raymond Scicluna
Skrivan tal-Kamra



Office of the Commissioner
for Older Persons

ANNUAL
Report
2022



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The Office of the Commissioner for Older Persons was set up in terms of the Commissioner for Older Persons Act (Chapter 553 of the Laws of Malta), to promote, advocate and safeguard the interests of older persons.

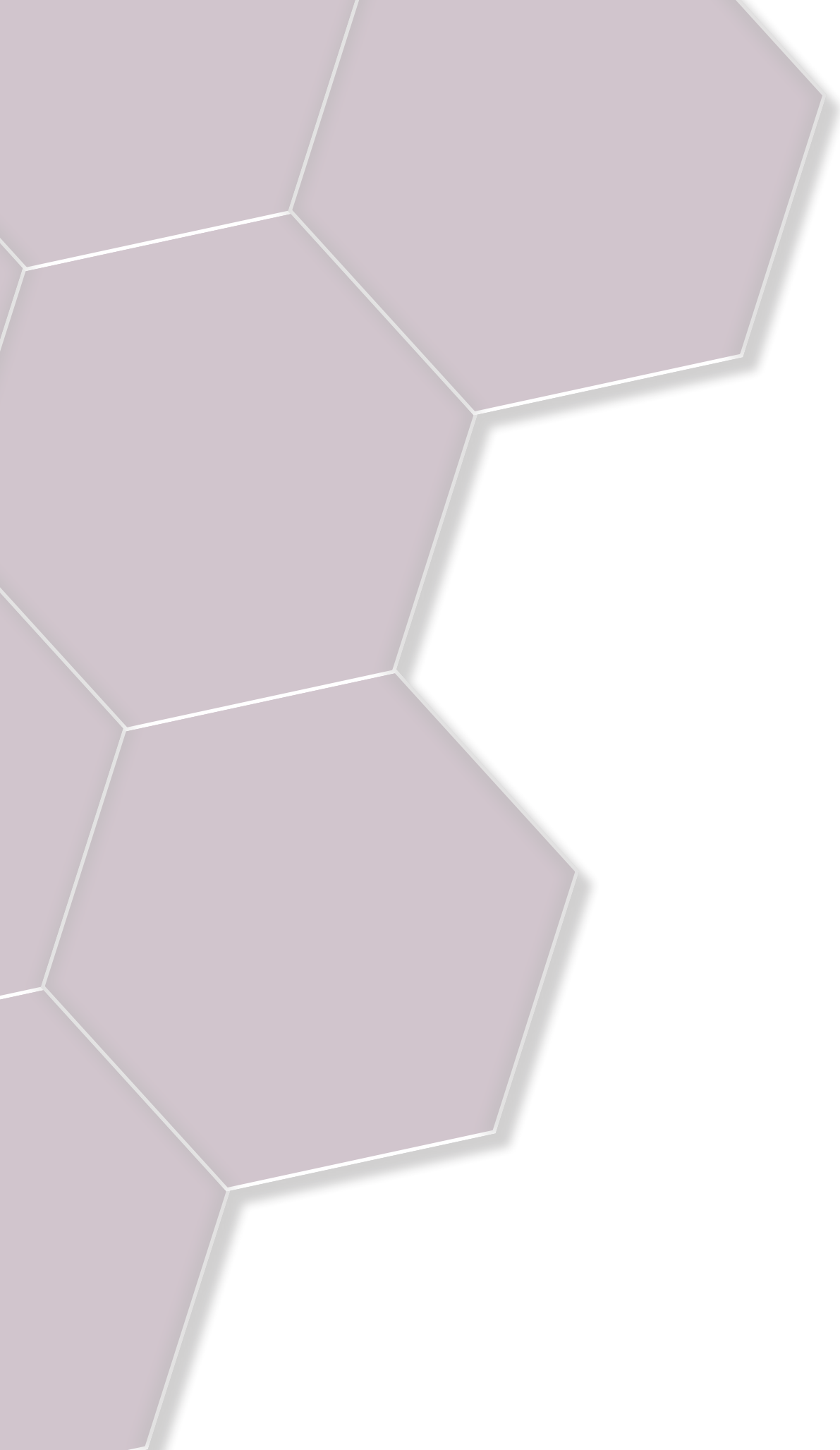
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FOREWORD

Message from the New Commissioner for Older Persons Prof Godfrey La Ferla

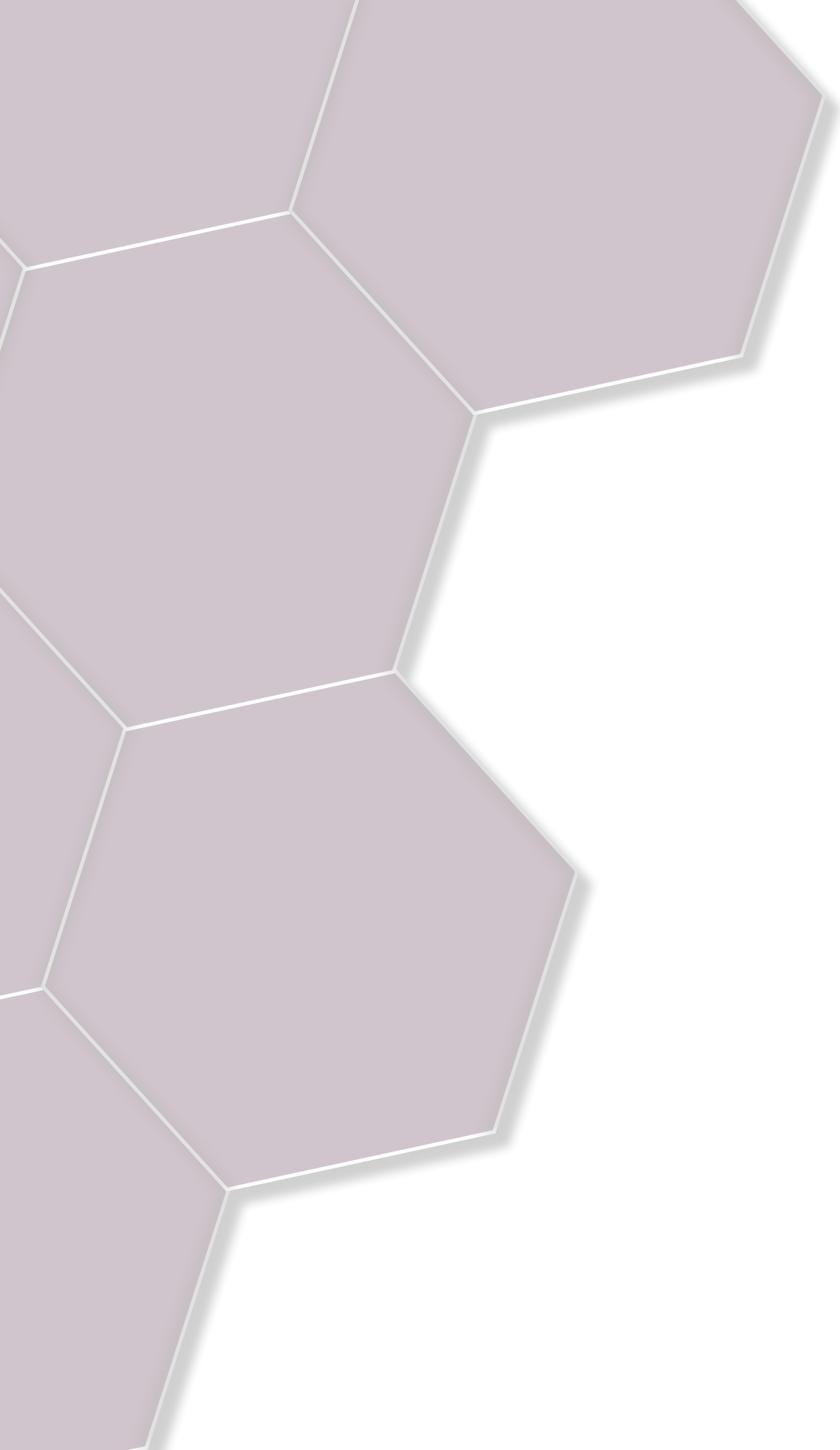


It was indeed a great honour for me to be appointed by the Prime Minister as the Commissioner for Older Persons on 10th May 2022. I am pleased that I have been given the opportunity to serve our elderly citizens for a period of three years. During my long professional life as a surgeon I have had considerable experience in dealing with the elderly as most of my surgical patients fell into this category. I have also personally experienced dealing with the elderly relatives as well as the specific problems brought on by old age. I thus feel that I have the necessary training and experience to serve in this post.

We are now in the post-Covid-19 era, having just emerged from more than two years of uncertainty, restrictions, isolation and most of all increased medical issues and deaths. These have certainly had a toll on most of us but the brunt of these difficulties has been mostly borne by the elderly. Thankfully this dark cloud has lifted but we still have to face the consequences of disruption that this condition has caused on a global level. These include shortages of necessary items, including medicines and the economic crisis both of which adversely affect the elderly. Such issues are being constantly addressed by government.

In the short period that I have been here, I have established relations with other entities responsible for the welfare of the elderly. I have tried to create awareness in issues that affect the elderly and their carers in a negative way and I have highlighted the need for focussed acute geriatric care. I have also taken up issues that my predecessor was involved in. Here, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, Dr Mary Vella for her incessant work to better the lives of the elderly and I look forward to continuing her work with older people as their independent champion, and to build on the progress that has already been made.

We must always remember that each elderly person that we come across has, in his or her own way, contributed to the development of our nation that now boasts, despite of its tiny size, of such high standards. Together we must strive to ensure and remember that older people are part of our nation and should therefore be considered as valued individuals. We should protect and demand that all their rights are upheld and considered equal to all. Ultimately, we are all responsible to guarantee that no-one is left behind or forgotten.



Introduction of the New Commissioner

Prof. Godfrey La Ferla was born in St. Julians' in 1954. He received his education at St. Aloysius College, B'Kara and his tertiary education at the University of Malta. He qualified as a doctor in London in 1977.

Following his medical and surgical resident posts in Lancashire and Humberside, he commenced his surgical training in Cambridge and Glasgow. He obtained his Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Glasgow and England in 1982.

In 1987, he was awarded the Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.) from the University of Glasgow and the Doctorate of Medicine and Surgery (M.D.) from the University of Malta in 1988.

He was appointed Consultant Surgeon to St Luke's Hospital and subsequently Mater Dei Hospital in 1991, a post which he held to his retirement from clinical practice in 2017. During this period, he was also Chairperson of the Department of Surgery from 2001 till 2013.

In 1991 he was also appointed Professor of Surgery at the University of Malta, elected as Head of the Department of Surgery in 2001 and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery in 2003, posts which he still holds till this day.

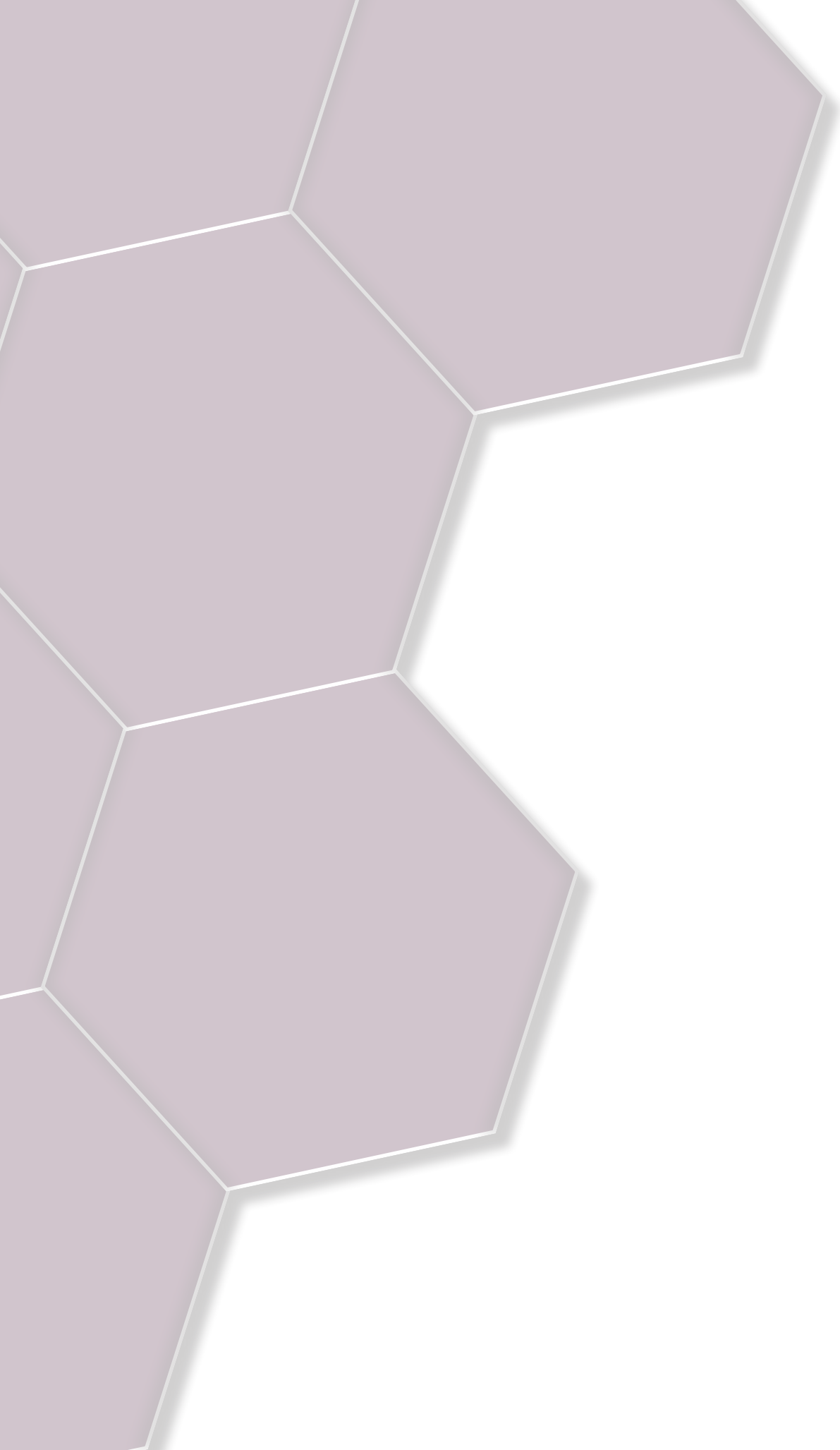
He was created Member of the Order of Merit in 2017 for services rendered to Medicine and was honoured with Ġieħ Ғal-Balzan for his contribution to his hometown on a national level in 2021.

Role of the Commissioner

The Commissioner for Older Persons is established by Act of 15th October 2016 , Chapter 553 of the Laws of Malta, the Commissioner for Older Persons Act. This report covers the performance of this Office from 1st January till 31st December 2022 and is being drawn up in accordance with this Act.

The law empowers the Commissioner for Older Persons to promote and safeguard the interests of older persons and investigate any alleged breaches or potential infringements of the human rights of older persons, the promotion of such rights as well as the protection and monitoring of the compliance with the United Nations Principles for Older Persons.

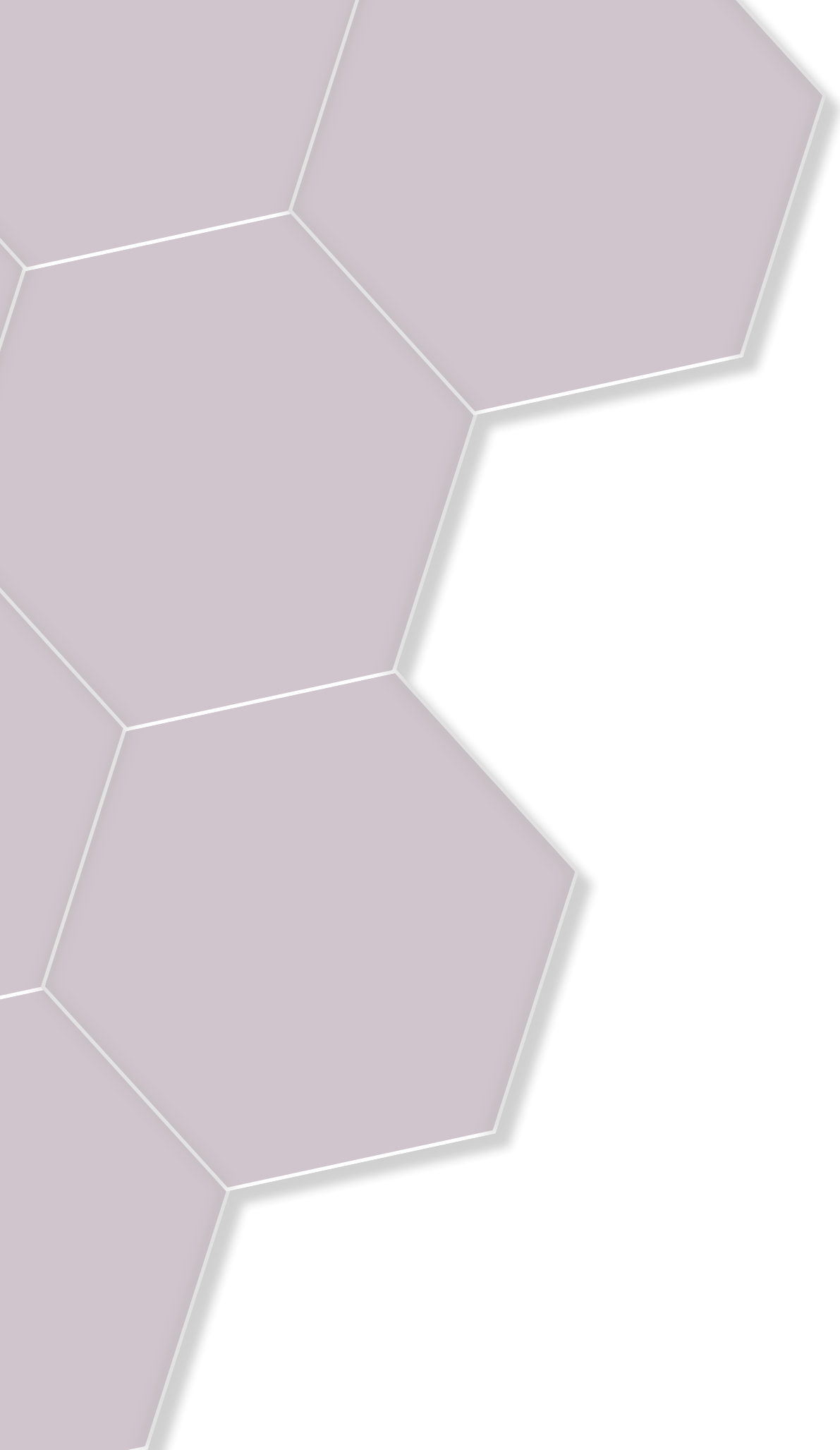
The CFOP has the duty to inter alia promote the highest standards of health, education, leisure, recreational facilities and social services for older persons in line with the relative approved standards and to ensure that all measures are taken by the relevant authorities to prevent and address poverty and social exclusion and any related issues among older persons. The Commissioner will also raise awareness about the potential, capabilities and contributions of older persons and combat age discrimination, prejudices, or harmful behaviour in their regard.



Functions and Duties

The terms of reference of the Commissioner for Older Persons are laid down in the Commissioner for Older Persons Act, Chapter 553 of the Laws of Malta. These are reproduced below.

- (1) The Commissioner shall have the following functions:
 - (a) to promote and advocate human rights and interests of older persons, and the need to safeguard those rights and interests;
 - (b) to promote opportunities for, and the elimination of discrimination against, older persons;
 - (c) to encourage best practices in the treatment of older persons;
 - (d) to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of any legislation relating and affecting the interests of older persons;
 - (e) to advocate for adequate support and services to carers of the older persons;
 - (f) to monitor and examine the impact of any decision taken by any body, entity or authority on the human rights and interests of older persons;
 - (g) to promote the protection of older persons from any kind of abuse, harm, ill-treatment, neglect and exploitation of any form;
 - (h) to promote the highest standards of health, education, leisure, recreational facilities and social services for older persons in line with the relative approved standards in place from time to time;
 - (i) to ensure that all possible measures are taken by the relevant authorities to prevent and address poverty and social exclusion and related issues among older persons; and
 - (j) to promote compliance with the United Nations Principles for Older Persons adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 16 December 1991, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing adopted by the United Nations during the Second World Assembly on Ageing (8-12 April 2002), and with such other international treaties, conventions or agreements relating to older persons as are or may be ratified or otherwise acceded to by Malta.
- (2) The Commissioner may issue guidelines on best practices in connection with any matter relating to the interests of older persons and in doing so the Commissioner may carry out any consultation which may be required or necessary.



Guiding Principles

The Commissioner shall be guided by the following general principles:

- (a) the best interests of older persons are paramount;
- (b) all older persons are to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness;
- (c) older persons with disability and, or disadvantaged social circumstances should enjoy the same quality of life as all other older persons;
- (d) older persons and their families are to be provided with opportunities to participate in decisions that affect them and in defining, planning and evaluating services to older persons; and
- (e) government, families and communities share the responsibility for the promotion of the development and well-being of older persons.

Composition of the Office of the Commissioner

The organisational set up is:

Prof Godfrey La Ferla Commissioner

Ms Claire Aquilina Senior Principal

The Council for Older Persons

A new Council for Older Persons was appointed as of 1st June 2022 being responsible for the performance of all its functions for a period of one year. The composition of the new Council is as follows:

Chairperson: Prof. Godfrey La Ferla

Members:

Mr Peter Paul Bonnici – appointed by the National Council for the Elderly
Dr Anthony De Giovanni – appointed by the National Council for the Elderly
Ms Joyce Debono – appointed by the National Commission for Active Ageing
Mr Ludgard Scicluna – appointed by the Minister for Active Ageing (MFAA)
Dr Joseph Zarb Adami – appointed by the Minister for Health (MFH)

Mr Norman Grech – appointed by the Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR)

The first meeting was held on 1st December 2022 at the Office of the Commissioner for Older Persons, Farsons Street, Hamrun.

As at 31 May 2022, the Council was previously composed as follows:

Dr Mary Vella (Chairperson) and the following members:

Prof Marvin Formosa

Dr Brian Farrugia

Mrs Mary Farrugia

Mr Peter Paul Bonnici

During the period between 01 January 2022 and 31 May 2022, other members of the Council included: Mr Joe Vella Caruana, Ms Olympia Galea and Mr Charles Farrugia.

Premises

During the year 2022, the Office of the Commissioner for Older Persons started operating from its new premises in Farsons Street, Hamrun. Furthermore, from October 2022, the premises started hosting the Hamrun Centre for the University of the Third Age (U3A) sessions. This Centre (which is one of 6 centres, 5 in Malta and 1 in Gozo) offers the possibility for older persons to continue to increase their knowledge and learning through weekly lectures on varying topics. Anyone over the age of 60, irrespective of any educational or academic qualifications can join. This also encourages the social interaction and active participation in the community.

Finance

During 2022, the Office of the Commissioner for Older Persons worked on an annual budget of €150,000 that was supplied by the central government. Additional funds have been secured for the year 2023, whereby the Office of the Commissioner will be in a position to finance projects and initiatives that are deemed beneficial for older persons and essential to the functions of the Office of the Commissioner.

Collaboration with other entities

The new Commissioner started establishing contact with the various Commissioners with the aim of establishing a network among stakeholders/peers. Familiarisation meetings were held with Commissioner for Mental Health and Commissioner for Health in the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Commissioner also held various meetings with organisations that are directly or indirectly involved with older persons such as representatives from KNA, President and members of the Malta Geriatric Society (MAGG), Dr Josianne Cutajar, CEO SVPR and Dr Renzo Degabriele, CEO (AACCD) among others.

Investigation of Complaints/Requests for Advice or Guidance

During 2022, the Commissioner for Older Persons, investigated a number of complaints, from or on behalf of older persons, as shown in the table below:

21 CASES TOTAL	Closed cases	6	Actioned by Commissioner	7
	Not within remit	15	Referred to other entities	14

A number of requests for advice or guidance on issues relating to older persons were also received. These were received either directly by the complainant speaking to the Commissioner or through the website (<https://mfaa.gov.mt/ufficcju-tal-kummissarju-ghall-persuni-anzjani/ikkuntatjana-cop/>).

Some of the cases also involved support to older persons in care homes, and on abuse of older persons. These were passed on to the relevant entities since they were not within the remit of the Commissioner.

As Office of the Commissioner for Older Persons we will continue to do our best to create awareness not only among older persons, but also to the public in general about these social realities concerning older persons.

Conferences, Meetings, Seminars and Other Events

Following his appointment on 10th May 2022, the Commissioner attended the following activities and events:

06 July 2022	The outgoing Commissioner, Dr Vella and the Commissioner Prof La Ferla attended the second meeting of the Parliamentary Social Affairs Committee. Dr Vella presented the 2021 Annual Report and delivered a presentation on the work carried out during her appointment as Commissioner. The new Commissioner, Prof La Ferla, thanked the outgoing Commissioner for her work. He discussed with the members of the Committee the problems of dementia and other problems faced by older persons, and ideas for initiatives and projects to assist older persons.
16 July 2022	The Commissioner attended the MAGG Unveiling of Monument at Fond Ghadir.
26 July 2022	Meeting with representatives of the Kunsill Nazzjonali Anzjani (KNA).
10 August 2022	Meeting with the Geriatric Medicine Society Delegation.



The Commissioner delivering his speech during the Parliamentary Session held in collaboration with KNA, “Drittijiet tal-Anzjani u l-Abbuz fuq l-Anzjani”, held on 30 September 2022. In the foreground: Hon. Dr. Jo Etienne Abela, Minister for Active Ageing.



Attendees at the National Parliament for the Elderly 2022 which was held in collaboration with the Kunsill Nazzjonali Anzjani (KNA), “Drittijiet tal-Anzjani u l-Abbuz fuq l-Anzjani”, held on 30 September 2022.



From left to right: The Commissioner for Older Persons, Prof G La Ferla and Hon. Dr. Jo Etienne Abela, Minister for Active Ageing, delivering his speech during the Parliamentary Session held in collaboration with KNA, “Drittijiet tal-Anzjani u l-Abbuz fuq l-Anzjani”, held on 30 September 2022.



Prof G. La Ferla, Chairperson of the Selection Board of the SVP Employee of the Year Awards

The Chairperson and members of the Selection Board for the SVP Employee of the Year Awards: (clockwise from left to right) Mr M. Mizzi, Prof G. La Ferla (Chair), Dr A. Vella.



The Commissioner for Older Persons, Prof G. La Ferla during the St Vincent de Paule Residence (SVPR) Employee of the Year Awards Ceremony

- 19 August 2022 Meeting of “Premju Anzjanita Attiva” held in AACC premises in Qormi.
- 12 September 2022 Familiarization meeting with the Commissioner for the Rights of Persons with Mental Disorders, Dr Denis Vella Baldacchino.
- 14 September 2022 Board Meeting of “Premju Anzjanita Attiva” held in AACC premises.
- 16 September 2022 Attended opening of the “Say No 2 Stroke” campaign held in The Imperial, Sliema. The pilot stroke prevention campaign was launched by the Active Ageing Ministry and will offer free tests around Malta, to identify and address the risk factors associated with stroke.
- 30 September 2022 The Commissioner attended and delivered his speech in the first Parliamentary Session of the National Parliament for the Elderly 2022 which was held in collaboration with the Kunsill Nazzjonali Anzjani (KNA). The theme chosen for this session was “Drittijiet tal-Anzjani u l-Abbuz fuq l-Anzjani” and was chaired by Hon Anglu Farrugia, Speaker of the House of Representatives. This session was also addressed by the Minister for Active Ageing, Hon. Dr. Jo Etienne Abela, Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Dr. Bernard Grech, and MPs Hon. Malcolm Paul Agius Galea and Hon. Paula Mifsud Bonnici.
- This session was also addressed by the Minister for Active Ageing, Hon. Dr. Jo Etienne Abela, Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Dr. Bernard Grech, and MPs Hon. Malcolm Paul Agius Galea and Hon. Paula Mifsud Bonnici.
- 15 November 2022 The Commissioner attended the Parliamentary Session for the Budget Speech delivered by Hon. Dr Jo Etienne Abela, Minister for Active Ageing.
- 01 December 2022 First Meeting of the Council for Older Persons, held in the Office of the Commissioner for Older Persons, Hamrun.
- 06 December 2022 The Commissioner highlighted the added expense and impacts on older persons of the new bottle recycling scheme, especially for those with impaired and reduced mobility, which was reported in the local media:
- <https://tvmnews.mt/news/harsa-lejn-l-istejjer-ewlenin-fl-gazzetti-li-hargu-dalghodu/>**
- Link to full article:
- <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/societys-vulnerable-bottle-recycling-scheme-added-expense.999661>**
- 06 December 2022 The Commissioner attended the St Vincent de Paule Residence (SVPR) Employee of the Year Awards Ceremony held in The Dolmen Hotel, Qawra.

