

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



MALTA

# To Accompany, Serve and Defend



As we present our 2024 Annual Report, we invite you to join us in thanking our funders and benefactors which in 2024, enabled us to continue accompanying, defending and serving asylum seekers and refugees in a context marked by significant challenges.

This report starts off by providing an overview of the critical issues affecting asylum seekers and refugees, before outlining the response which, thanks to the commitment of our staff, volunteers, donors and partners, JRS Malta was able to continue providing in 2024.

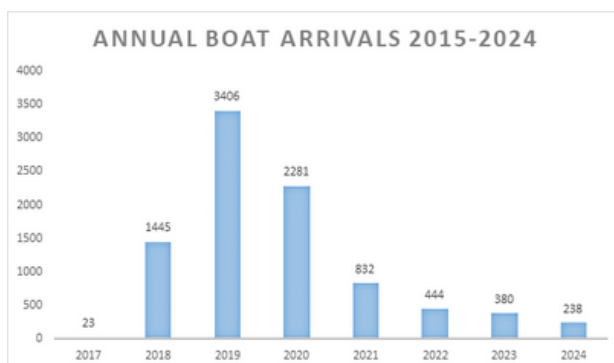
# Context

## Decreasing number of boat arrivals: at what price?

As may be seen from the statistics below, in 2024, the downward trend in boat arrivals that started in 2021 continued throughout 2024, with just 238 asylum seekers reaching Malta through the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR).

The flipside of this statistic is that an increasing numbers of migrants leaving Libyan shores were intercepted and returned to Libya where they often face arbitrary detention in miserable conditions, torture, violence and other grave human rights violations.

Moreover, according to data published by the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Missing Migrants Project, 2,333 people on the move were recorded as dead or missing in the Mediterranean in 2024.



## Detained and isolated

For the majority of asylum seekers, the 'initial' de facto detention for medical clearance, is closely followed by a detention order. Asylum seekers from countries considered 'safe', such as Egypt or Bangladesh, or countries where there was a realistic chance of return, face the real possibility of spending months in detention, first waiting for their application to be decided and then awaiting return.

In 2024, as in previous years, JRS Malta was not granted permission to visit detention facilities to meet asylum seekers, organise activities, and to provide information in group settings, pastoral care and psychosocial support. We were only allowed to meet individual clients to provide legal assistance, in a container outside of the facilities where people are held. These rules make it impossible for us to monitor the conditions in detention or to meet anyone other than the people who managed to contact us by phone to make an appointment or who were otherwise referred to the service.

We are therefore concerned that, as a result of these restrictions on NGO access, many people remain without information, or access to effective and timely intervention to prevent or address violations of their rights in detention. It also makes detention harder for the detainees, who are completely isolated, and deprived of contact with the outside world and of information from any source other than state authorities.



### **Pushed to the brink**

Over the past years, there has been a noticeable increase in homelessness and poverty among the asylum-seeking population. Individuals facing particularly vulnerable situations due to medical or mental health problems, struggle to access the services they need to live with dignity. The lack of adequate healthcare, mental health support, and tailored services compounds their vulnerabilities, leaving them at risk of further deterioration.

As always, the situation is much harder for people with severe and specific needs, such as survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and trauma, people with chronic medical conditions, serious illness or mental illness, people with disability, and unaccompanied children.

During 2024 we observed an increase in the number of asylum seekers, whose application for protection was rejected, being denied access to medical care, as laws and policies on access to healthcare started being more scrupulously observed, in response to the pressure that the increase in TCNs living and working in Malta placed on the healthcare system.

### **Permanently strangers**

Refugees and asylum seekers share their struggle to belong. This is most acutely experienced by those who, despite having lived and worked in Malta for 10, 15 and 20 years, have no stable documentation and live constantly in the fear of deportation. What should be run of the mill administrative procedures and interactions with customer care personnel become exhausting and humiliating exercises in which they have to prove their identity, their right to be here and their very right to exist.



# JRS Malta

## Core Principles

Faced with these multiple challenges, JRS Malta continues striving to build a society in which all members – including refugees and asylum seekers – can, not only survive, but thrive. In this we are guided by the following core principles:



**Walking with young people towards a hope-filled future.** We choose to walk with young people who struggle to access the services and support they need to achieve their goals, empowering and accompanying them, for as long as they require our support, on their journey to becoming independent and active members of society.



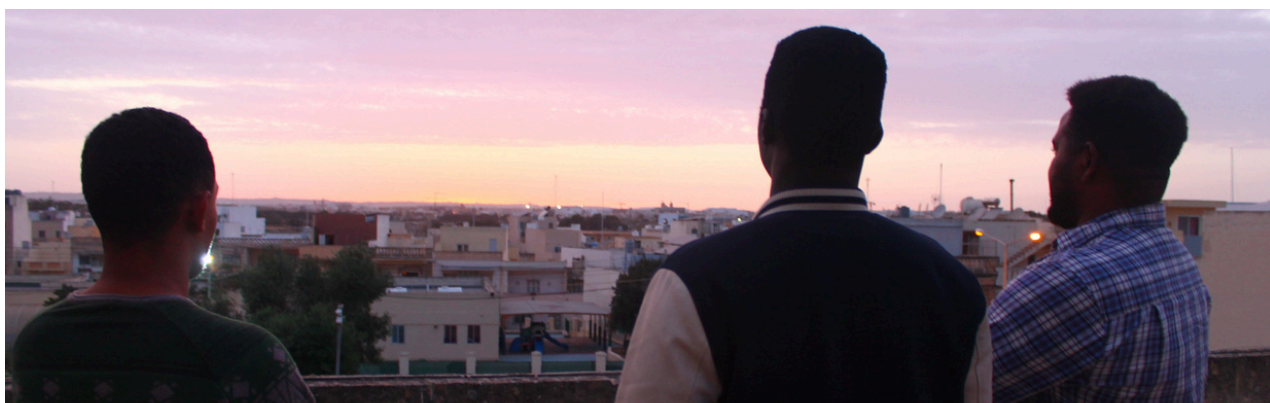
**Standing with the vulnerable and excluded and supporting them to live life with dignity.** We choose to be present with, and to work with those who are unable to access the support they need most, who struggle to meet their most basic needs and who find themselves stuck in the margins of society, working with others to support them to live with dignity.



**Creating spaces for reconciliation to facilitate community building.** Acknowledging our part in a society that excludes, and mindful of our own contribution to social tension, we strive to be part of the transformation of our community into one that is more just. Through encounter and dialogue, we choose to work with the community, empowering people to take ownership of fostering this social change.



**Working for systemic change and justice.** We choose a holistic approach to doing this, engaging with the community, but also with decision-makers, with the aim of fostering long-term social change and justice.



# Projects

In 2024, JRS Malta sustained its core services, primarily information, legal assistance, psychosocial support, and basic integration support for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection through several projects which are listed below:

## Project Integrated

As in previous years, this project, which is funded by UNHCR and implemented in collaboration with aditus foundation and Women's Rights Foundation, had two main components: one focused on protection and the other on integration.

Through the project, we worked towards these aims through different means including service provision (primarily information, legal services, social work support, and psychological support), provision of training, educational support, workshops for women, and advocacy.

## Reconciliation project

During 2024, JRS Malta concluded the Reconciliation Project, a three-year project which aimed to counter misinformation, foster social inclusion of people seeking refuge, and build right relationships between refugees and the host community. The project intended to create spaces of encounter, mostly in Marsa and Hamrun, for refugees and the Maltese population in hope of creating dialogue and journeying together towards reconciliation. The focus in this project was on appreciation of religious diversity. This project was funded by GHR Foundation through JRS International.

*"Thank you so much for phoning me, no one every checked on me" (Participant in an Encounter Group organised by the Żebbug Parish with the support of the JRS Outreach and Reconciliation Coordinator.)*

## Invest operational grant

In 2024, JRS Malta continued benefitting from a 3-year Invest operational grant which is funded and operated by Aġenzija żgħażaġħ. This grant allowed us to continue developing our youth programme which consists of the following services:

1. A youth information service
2. A basic education programme, consisting of language and other classes
3. Individualised education and employability support, to access educational opportunities, complete their studies, and find dignified employment in line with their qualifications. In 2024, this service received the support of APS Bank.
4. Regular outreach in the open centres where young people are accommodated.
5. Accommodation and support for refugee students, at Dar Pedro Arrupe, Zejtun, to help them cope with the financial burdens that can arise when going into full time education. In 2024, this component of the JRS youth programme was also supported by the P. Cutajar Foundation.
6. Youth activities intended to counter isolation and loneliness among refugee youth.



## From surviving to thriving

In December 2024, the project From surviving to thriving, which started in September 2023 and is funded by Fundación Mapfre, was renewed for a further twelve months. This project aims at helping young asylum seekers in Malta develop their potential and improve their employability and/or their prospects of job progression through education.

The activities covered by the grant from Fundación Mapfre include a basic education and integration programme, focusing on language acquisition, literacy, life skills and civic education, as well as a specialised service providing individualised education and employment support.





**Filipa, lawyer**

*"As a member of the legal team, on a daily basis I meet with clients and support them wherever they may be – in the community, in hospitals, in prison and in detention. We work to help people navigate the somewhat complex asylum system here in Malta, providing legal counselling and information.*

*The challenges our clients are facing are multiple and increasingly complex. Since we are a small team, there is only so much we can do, especially in the context of a restrictive system which impacts our access to people and what we can do.*

*Notwithstanding these difficulties, I find my work at JRS very fulfilling. I feel privileged to work alongside colleagues who are so brave, capable and kind. And the clients I meet along the way, the bonds and relationships created is what gives me strength to continue this work."*



## **Pathways towards a hope-filled future: the implementation of an integration programme for youth**

In September 2024, JRS started implementing a four-year project called Pathways towards a hope-filled future; the implementation of an integration programme for youth. The main objective of this project, which is co-funded by the European Union, is to develop and run a targeted integration programme for adolescent and young adult asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection aged 15-30, promoting self-development, social inclusion, and labour market integration.

The programme, which aims to provide young asylum seekers with opportunities to develop the necessary values, knowledge, skills and attitudes for active citizenship and employability, consists of a combination of:

- Information provision and individual guidance, mentoring and support to address gaps in information and integration support for this cohort of TCNs.
- Non-formal education, including language, literacy, civic orientation and life-skills, for those who are unable to obtain these services from other sources.
- Community-building initiatives aimed at creating spaces where refugee youth can come together to find support, make friends, and explore the different facets of life in Malta

The project also builds the capacity of service providers to provide holistic and appropriate integration services to refugee youth and explores ways of making these services more relevant and accessible to categories of young asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection who are hard to reach, particularly young women, including those who have children.

## **Forced to hide: Understanding the human cost of the shadow economy on the lives of vulnerable migrant workers in Malta**

This two-year project is supported by the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) and the Robert Bosch Stiftung's grant programme on labour rights and labour migration. Through it, JRS Malta is developing a more systematic and extensive knowledge base of the day-to-day realities of undocumented migrants, and the consequences of government policy on their lives.

The project report which will be launched in mid-2025 will bring to light experiences and needs which have been left largely ignored, encourage action which is informed by people's lived experience and inform our advocacy work on undocumented migrants.

## Supporting the protection and integration needs of vulnerable asylum seekers in Malta: a coordinated approach

In November 2024, JRS Malta, in partnership with aditus Foundation and Migrant Women Association Malta, started implementing a project to promote the integration of vulnerable asylum seekers in Malta through a combination of direct service provision, developing structures for improved networking and service coordination between service providers, and outreach and capacity-building with and for refugee communities.

This project is supported by a grant from the State Secretariat for Migration (Swiss Confederation) and focuses on two priority areas:

- Improving the case management of vulnerable individuals by reinforcing and increasing the partners' capacity to provide services – including legal, psychological and social work services, cultural mediation, basic integration support – to vulnerable individuals, and address the challenges related to social integration, through a new service promoting community-building and skill acquisition.
- Empowering communities of support by reaching out to refugee communities to better understand the protection and integration needs of vulnerable asylum seekers, and building communities' capacity to support them.

### Sima, from Iran

When we arrived in Malta as refugees, our lives changed. In Iran, we had a home and a job, we were financially secure, and we had a respectable social standing in our city. I was an art teacher and my husband was an anaesthesiologist. Emigrating was not a decision we made lightly; we had to. But that decision changed everything.

When we arrived in Malta, we had no job, no support, and not even a common language. Starting over from scratch at forty is not easy. In the early days, I had only my immediate family by my side, and I had to work 40 to 50 hours a week; Whereas before, in Iran, I would only leave the house for 12 hours a week, for fun. Stress, loneliness, and anxiety had become my daily routine.

It was during this difficult time that I met the Joint Refugee Service (JRS); a turning point in my life. Here I met people who not only showed me the way, but also gave me hope and motivation for a new start, even in a foreign country.

The legal guidance I received from the lawyer at JRS will be unforgettable for me. The JRS team also helped me in enrolling my children in school and MCAST college, advising on education, and following up on my husband's career documents.

JRS also helped me participate in awareness raising activities. During these activities which took place in schools, I talk about the differences in cultures and how to live together, without prejudice and without violence.

By participating in JRS language classes and with the help of the JRS teachers, I was gradually able to communicate. One of my interesting experiences was participating in the "Teaching English through Dance" program, which introduced me to art projects and helped me develop my artistic style. .

These contacts allowed me to design a logo for the Migrant Festival during Refugee Week and to exhibit some of my works. This year, with the support of this same group, I was able to find sponsors to hold my first painting exhibition. For me, this is a beginning; the beginning of a return to what I had once left behind in Iran.

If it weren't for organizations like JRS, I would probably never have found my way in what was for me a strange country and would have remained in the same vortex of hopelessness and stress. I am deeply grateful to all the dear JRS staff for their companionship, support, and humanity.

With respect and gratitude, Sima





## Detention under the Spotlight

In Detention under the spotlight, JRS Europe worked together with other European Country Offices including Malta to collect detention visitors' observations in a systematic way, compare them, look for trends, identify good practices and formulate recommendations for improvement. This project ended in 2024 and was made possible thanks to the generous support of Oak Foundation.

Ahmed\*, an asylum seeker from Egypt, arrived in Malta in July 2021. He was detained upon arrival to undergo medical screenings for Covid-19 and tuberculosis. For a period of 70 days, he remained detained and was never given a detention order. 4 months later, he was allowed to apply for asylum and was issued with a detention order, which stated that he was detained to determine his nationality/ identity and due to risk of absconding. Upon review of the detention order, the Immigration Appeals Board confirmed its lawfulness. In January, he was verbally informed that his application was rejected and a removal order was issued. His return could not be secured by the authorities, and he was released in May. He spent 664 days in detention. (\*Name and other details were adapted for people's protection.)



## Ambaxxaturi għall-gustizzja soċjali u esperjenza hands-on ma' JRS

This project is designed to cultivate active and inclusive citizenship by encouraging volunteering initiatives and providing transformative educational experiences for young individuals.

A group of 6 young people are participating in the programme which aims to foster a generation of informed, engaged and compassionate young people, while making a positive impact on the community and the organization.

The young volunteers in the programme are receiving (i) formation and on the ground experience, (ii) communication and media training, (iii) community engagement with migrant youth, and (iv) the opportunity to actively support JRS in awareness-raising campaigns.

This project is funded by the Komunitajiet Aktar Inklussivi Scheme managed by the Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector (MIV).

# The people we served in 2024

## In numbers



170 individuals were provided with legal support



35 individuals provided with social work support



27 Individuals provided with psychological support



99 Individuals received employment and basic integration support



142 individuals participated in our youth programme and received education support



53 individuals were provided with healthcare support



15 individuals received financial assistance to meet basic needs (accommodation, medical and living expenses)



More than 600 people reached through our outreach, awareness raising and advocacy activities

## Advocacy: Detention under the spotlight

In May 2024, JRS Malta organized a public event as part of the Detention under the Spotlight project. The event was held at the Capuchin Friars, Floriana, to shed light on the detention of asylum seekers in Malta, detailing what has and hasn't changed over the years, the impact that it has on the people that live through it and why NGOs like ours advocate for the creation of a system that is more humane, and ultimately, an end to immigration detention in Malta.

In the main room, we exhibited a timeline of events surrounding detention, from 1998 up until the present day. In particular, this detention timeline covered the number of migrant arrivals, local and international court cases, government decisions affecting the asylum procedure and detention practices, as well as riots and protests that erupted over the years.



The event was also an important opportunity to commemorate the lives of those who died whilst in detention. We remembered, among others, the brutal murder of Mamadou Kamara, who was killed after repeated kicks in the groin in the back of a detention services van.

**“Detention is a place that shouldn’t even exist” -  
From the Comment Board at Detention Under the Spotlight**





## Awareness-raising and Reconciliation: Salott taħt iz-zuntier

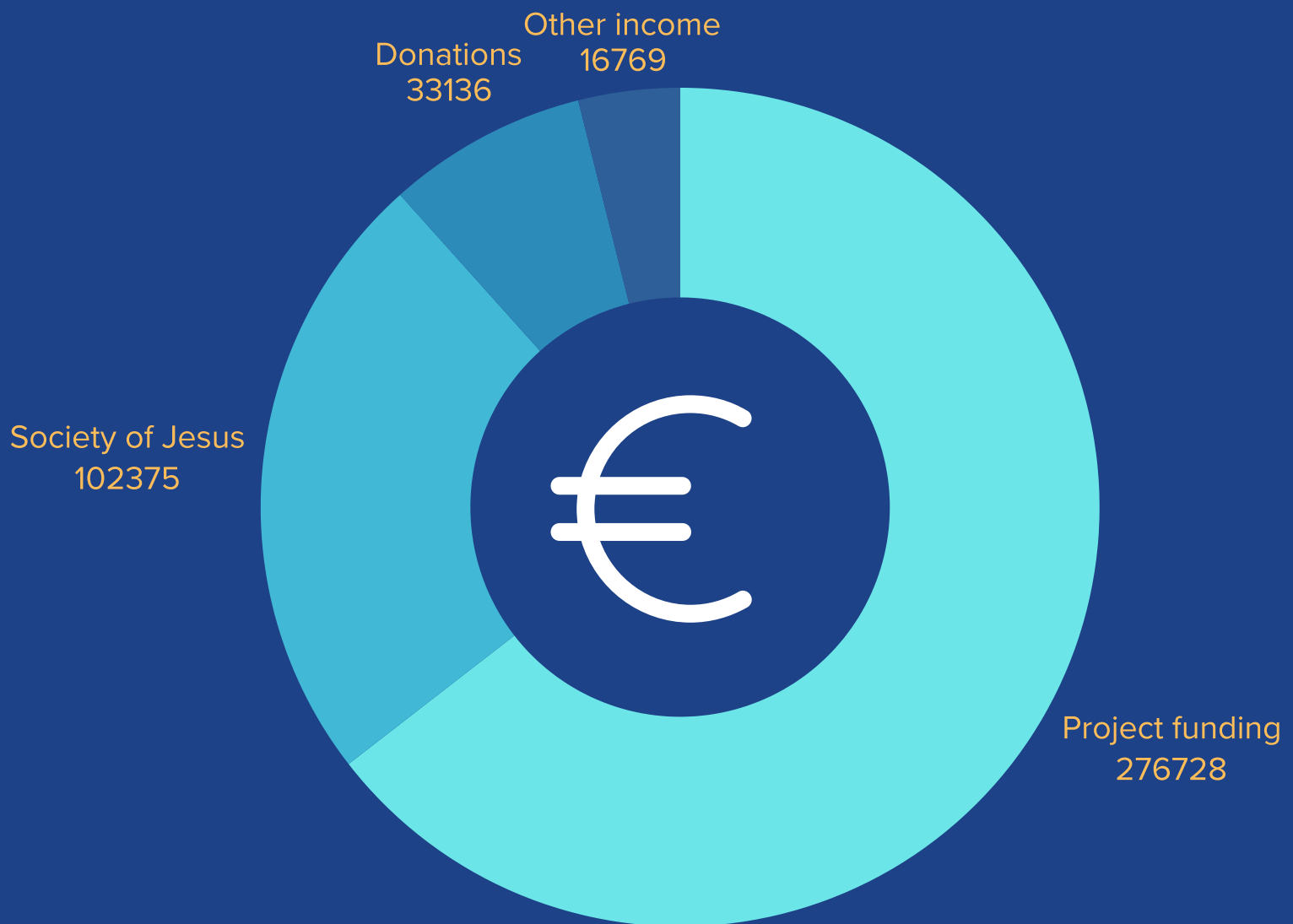
In February 2024, JRS Malta organised the first “Salott taħt iz-Zuntier” as part of its Reconciliation project. On a monthly basis, with the support of a small group of committed volunteers, coffee, tea and various snacks and food items are prepared for those who gather under the parvis of the Holy Trinity Parish Church in Marsa.

Providing food is proving to be an effective way to initiate conversations, show that someone cares and build trust, especially in the context of an increase in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness and poverty. As the “Salott taħt iz-Zuntier” events become a regular fixture, a growing number of attendees feel comfortable enough to sit with the JRS team, invite others to join, and also share their own food.

**“Thank you for actually doing something for those in need. A lot of entities speak but do nothing and have no idea what happens here in Malta” - An elderly member of the Marsa host community**



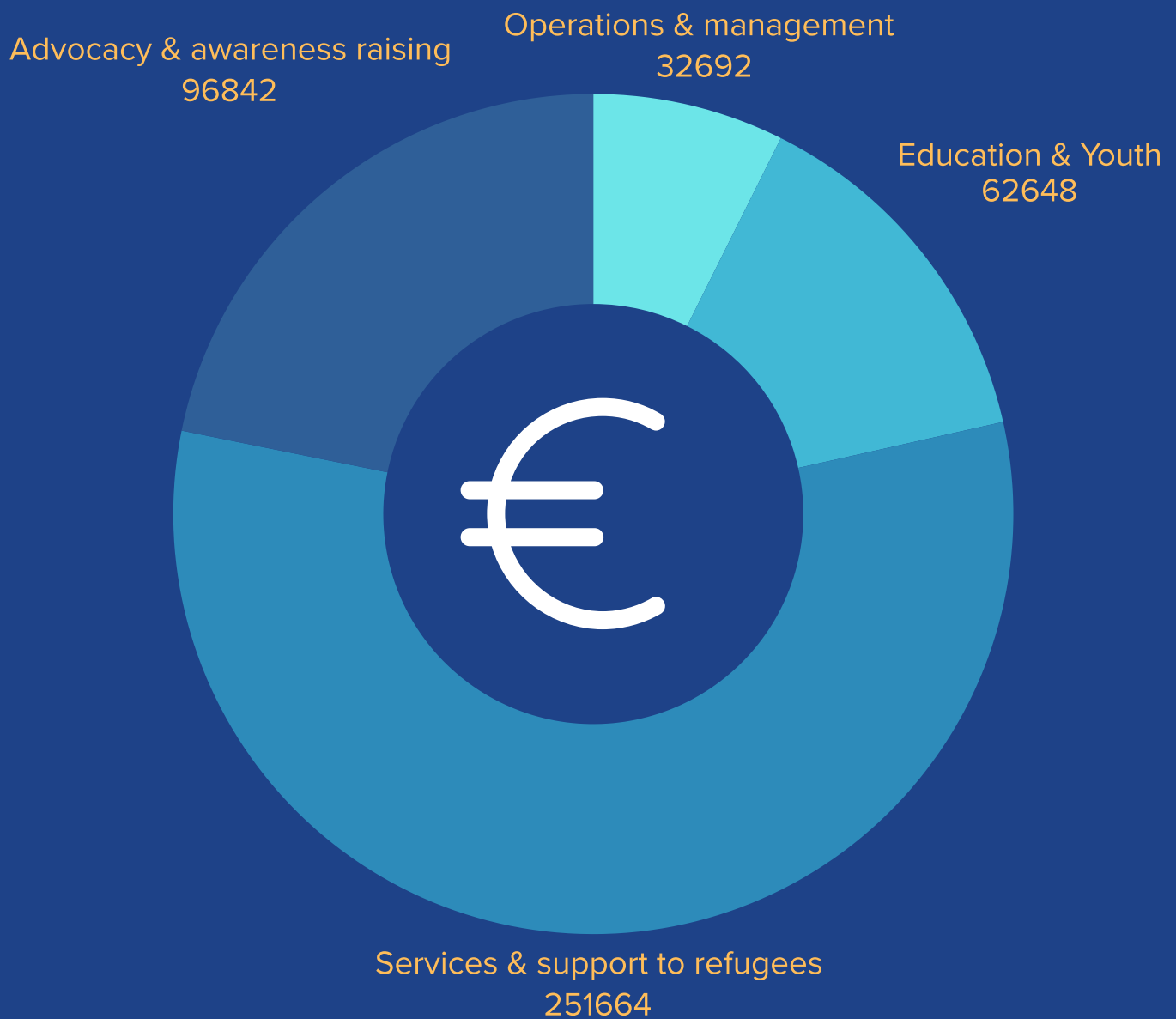
# Income



Values in EURO.

**TOTAL: €429,008**

# Expenditure



Values in EURO.  
**TOTAL: €443,846**



# Thanks

JRS's mission in Malta would not be possible without the help of numerous collaborators. We would like to thank our benefactors and funders who believe in our cause. A special thanks goes to the JRS team, whose dedication makes the dream of our founder, Fr Pedro Arrupe, a reality; to our volunteers who give their precious time to assist refugees; and to every individual who gave even the smallest of monetary or other forms of support when JRS called for help.

Thanks to your support, we can fulfil our mission to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees.

# Donate

Our work is only possible thanks to the help of people who share our vision. Any donation, large or small, will help us to continue providing our services and give refugees and asylum seekers hope. This is how you can help:

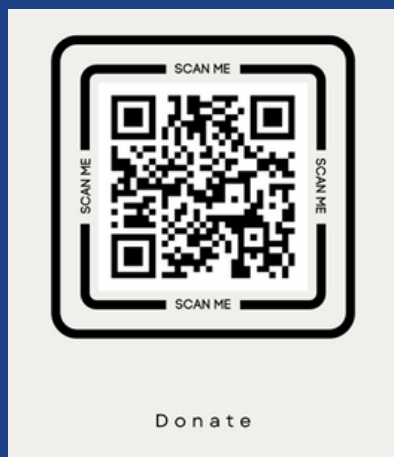
**Postal donation by cheque to JRSMalta**

**Bank transfer**

**HSBC MT45MMEB44163000000016116055050**

**BOV MT11VALL22013000000040012100660**

**Visit our Donate Page on [jrsmalta.org](https://jrsmalta.org)**



Jesuit Refugee Service – JRS  
Malta  
Nr 1, Dar Sarria,  
Pjazza Emmanuel Tonna,  
Floriana

(+356) 21 44 2751  
(+356) 99 21 4445

[info@jrsmalta.org](mailto:info@jrsmalta.org)

**jrsmalta**



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