



ANNUAL REPORT

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RIMBERTO

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MESSAGE BY THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members, supporters and friends,

2024 was a very busy year for Birth Forward, as we have increased our operations. With funding we secured primarily through funded projects, we hired full time staff and contracted associates to facilitate work and expanded our networks nationally and around the region.

Starting from January 2024, **Margarita Kapsou** joined as our **CEO**. In February, **Christine Mavrou** also joined the team as **Advocacy and Communications Coordinator**. Working along with our both grassroots and experts team, our Administrative Board, the Scientific Advisory Board, our active volunteers, our parent consultants, our growing network and a pool of external associates.

We also took steps toward supporting and organizing our operations, with updated operational plans, introductions of various internal regulations, including, among others, an organizational chart, a first draft of an Employee Handbook, a Green Policy and Child Protection Policy and Terms of Reference for the Scientific Advisory Board.

With work led by our now CEO Margarita Kapsou and a competent team of associates and volunteers, we have secured project funding, with **RESPECT** (CERV-Daphne), **RespectWATCH** (CERV-BUILD) and **Mind the Mum** (EU4Health) projects. At the same time, the team working on the Baby Buddy Communicators project which commenced in 2022 completed its work by October 2024.

In 2024, the work of the RESPECT Project (funded by the CERV-Daphne program), launched in April 2023 and led by CUT Nursing Department and **Dr. Nicos Middleton**, intensified, with BF's role becoming more central, by joining the consultations of the National Working Group for the National Strategy on Respectful Maternity Care (RMC), spearheading the first empowerment program for women and pregnant parents on Respectful Maternity Care, which led to both an in-person program and an e-course with various tools, and starting work on a Public Awareness Campaign on RMC. With the RespectWATCH project, we started strengthening alliances with human rights and gender equality allies, such as SPAVO and the Gender Equality Commissioner, and started working to produce documentation and advocacy tools, to set up a National Watchdog strategy for monitoring human rights violations in Cyprus.

In October 2024, we also kicked off the **Mind the Mum** project, funded through the EU4Health programme and led by the Cyprus University of Technology and our SAB member **Dr. Eleni Hadjigeorgiou**. The project is important for our mission in supporting maternal mental health, as it will study the prevalence and associated factors of postpartum depression and anxiety and prepare, with the participation of our grassroots team of parents, an empowerment program to boost psychological resilience among expecting women.

We also worked on and submitted numerous several proposals for new project funding, with both local and international partners, for funding programs such as Erasmus+, CERV, EU4Health, the “Commonwealth Foundation and others. Securing new project funding is an increasingly challenging task as the environment becomes increasingly competitive, demanding extremely high scores to secure funding. One of the projects we joined was successful, the ALTHEA project led by **Dr. Angelos Kassianos** at CUT, which aims to promote health-positive behaviors in pregnancy and is expected to start in May 2025. While waiting for some of the results, we are also looking into reviews for proposals we submitted so we can optimize and resubmit the most promising ones.

In 2024 we also continued our important advocacy work. Our former president and now Spokesperson **Ioli Orphanide** continued her hard work representing us in the **National Committee on the Promotion of Natural Birth and the Reduction of Prematurity**. We also started work on drafting our policies and positions on topics relevant to the scope of our work, such as Reproductive Rights and choices, Parental Leave, Rainbow Families and Breastfeeding.

Our networking continued to expand and grow in 2024: In addition to strengthening our alliance with the Cyprus Federation of Patients’ Associations, we joined the **Cyprus Women’s Lobby**, the **Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinating Council (PVCC)** and applied to join the **National Machinery for Women’s Rights (NMWR) National Committee**, although the latter was halted due to an ongoing legal reform and is planned to be revisited early next year.

We continued to be present in various events we have been joining annually, as well as expanding opportunities with both own initiatives and invitations we have received. We were invited to conduct a workshop on Respectful Maternity Care during 2024 **Femme Fest**, we joined as every year, the **NGO Fair** at Youth Fest and the **Simultaneous Breastfeeding Event** by the Pancyprian Breastfeeding Association in October. We were also invited to join a discussion after the **play “Three voices”** produced by Maria Iole Karolidou based on Sylvia Plath’s poem and adapted with real women’s stories, to present our work in university and school classes, joined podcasts and invited presentations.

We joined opportunities for building and strengthening our capacity, especially through the BUILD program, such as trainings on specific skills as well as coaching and mentoring. We also worked internally on our capacity building and optimizing our functions, with the support of organizational consultant **Eleni Karaoli**, who facilitated both an Ethics workshop in February 2024 and a Strategic Planning Workshop in April 2024. As a result, we produced a Code of Ethics and Conduct and updated our Strategic Plan with 9 goals for the period 2024-2027.

In the end of 2024, during our Annual General and Constitutional Meeting we presented this work and approved constitutional changes identified as necessary or beneficial during the workshops. Heading into 2025, we will continue our sustainability and growth efforts,

We are very proud of our achievements this year. Central to our successes is our organisational culture of cooperation, mutual respect and trust. As a family, we support and uplift one another, fostering solidarity and collaboration with like-minded NGOs and partners who share our vision and values.

As we look ahead, I am confident that Birth Forward will continue to evolve and thrive. Together, let us embark on the next chapter of our journey with optimism and determination.

With gratitude and
anticipation,



Giota Doukanari
Board President,
2023-2025





OUR PROFILE

Birth Forward is a member-driven, grassroots organization active island-wide, dedicated to supporting families across Cyprus.

Since our founding in 2015, we have grown into a strong network advocating for respectful and informed maternity care, family support, and parental empowerment.

We are governed by our Annual General Assembly and a diverse 7-member Board, comprised primarily of parents—predominantly women—who bring firsthand experience and passion to our mission. Our Scientific Advisory Board, consisting of experts in medicine, law, and human rights, continues to uphold the integrity and evidence-based approach of our initiatives, ensuring that our vision for a better future for families is both impactful and sustainable. In 2024, Birth Forward remains committed to expanding its reach, strengthening alliances, and advocating for systemic change to better serve families across Cyprus.

OUR VISION

Everyone has the right to suitable information and instruction in relation to the creation of a family. Birth Forward empowers and supports mothers, fathers and professionals in making autonomous decisions with a conscious use of technology while, at the same time, respecting the natural process of conception, pregnancy, birth and beyond.



Giota Doukanari
PRESIDENT



Ekaterina Miroshnichenko
VICE PRESIDENT



Theodora Filippidou
SECRETARY



Elina Kyriacou
TREASURER

ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD

2023-2025



Aftoditi Anatolitou
MEMBER



Maria Stavrou
MEMBER



Irene Sofroniou
MEMBER



Margarita Kapsou
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER



Christine Mavrou
ADVOCACY &
COMMUNICATIONS
COORDINATOR

STAFF & **CONSULTANTS 2023**



Marianna Moore
PROJECT & FINANCIAL
ASSOCIATE



Maria Miltiadou
MPM & CO
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR



Eleni Karaoli
ORGANIZATIONAL &
STRATEGY CONSULTANT



Martha Vasiliadou
(GENESTIAL) IT SERVICES
for RespectWATCH

THE CONTEXT IN 2024



As Cyprus approaches 2025, the healthcare system continues to solidify its post-COVID trajectory, with the General Healthcare System (GESY) now having completed over five years since its 2019 implementation. GESY, governed by the Health Insurance Organization (HIO), is firmly entrenched as a national framework ensuring healthcare access for all residents, funded through a tripartite contribution model encompassing employees, employers, and state resources. The system's maturation is evident in the streamlined patient pathways and expanded inclusion of healthcare providers, yet underlying inequities persist, necessitating further strategic reforms.

The post-GESY period continues to exacerbating class-based disparities. Private maternal care providers outside GESY primarily cater to affluent demographics, who have private health insurance or can afford to pay out of pocket, while the majority of maternity care has shifted to GESY-affiliated providers. Meanwhile, public maternity units primarily cater to marginalized communities, mostly migrants and asylum seekers, who are not eligible for GESY access. The effects of this “stratification” need to be understood in order to guide policies needed for ensuring equitable maternal care distribution across socioeconomic lines.

Although the prevalence of highly medicalized birthing practices remains a concern—with persistently high cesarean, induction, and episiotomy rates—the inclusion of midwives as independent GESY providers since December 2022 offers a transformative avenue for more holistic, community-centered maternal care. This milestone, championed through sustained advocacy, suggests an emerging paradigm shift towards respecting physiological childbirth processes and supporting perinatal mental health.

The issue of maternity leave reform continues to gain momentum, with extensive public and legislative discourse in late 2024 emphasizing the societal and economic benefits of extended leave provisions. This dialogue underscores a broader recognition of maternal health as a public priority, with implications for workforce reintegration and long-term family welfare.

As Cyprus moves into 2025, the healthcare sector faces a critical juncture. The challenge lies in balancing systemic improvements with efforts to close remaining gaps in access and equity. Continued engagement from stakeholders across healthcare, policy, and civil society will be crucial in shaping a resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking healthcare environment. The coming year offers a unique opportunity to build on recent successes, fostering a healthcare landscape that better serves all segments of the population while addressing the pressing needs of maternal health reform.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027

In 2024, we renewed our Strategic Plan for the 2024–2027 period. As a grassroots organization, Our work is grounded in the lived experiences of the women, parents and families we support, and our volunteers remain at the heart of everything we do—from outreach and support to awareness-raising and advocacy. For the Strategic Plan we followed a participatory process, involving our members at the base. The process was facilitated by our organisational consultant contracted for this purpose, **Eleni Karaoli**. Following various consultations, our renewed Strategic Plan was finalized after a workshop held with our members on **27 April 2024**.

Together, we revisited our vision. We reviewed the achievements, outcomes and challenges of the previous plan and identified strategic priorities for the coming years. The strategic planning meetings and workshop, resulted in our renewed Strategic Plan which consists of **1 General** and **4 Specific Priorities (1 Internal and 3 External)** containing **1 General** and **9 Specific Strategic Goals**. The full text of our strategic plan explains the process and outlines the goals, which are also summarized in the graph in the next page.

In the coming 3 year period, we have set internal and external priorities that will move us further along our vision. We aim to strengthen support of our volunteers, build and boost relations with more donors, networks and allies, provide information, communicate messages and advocate for practices that contribute to future and new parents feeling empowered and informed to make choices about the creation and upbringing of their families.

Each strategic plan is a working document—it evolves with us. But it is built on a consistent vision: that respectful, rights-based maternity care is possible, and that communities need to be empowered to lead the way.

Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Priorities & Strategic Goals (SGs)

GENERAL PRIORITY: Operational, Administration and Management Issues



general SG

Continue Updating Policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

PRIORITY 1 : Ensure the Financial SUSTAINABILITY of the organization



SG1 Define clear and effective Standard Operating Policies and Procedures (SOPPs) for the organization's key functions.

SG2 Diversify Funding Sources

SG3 Build Capacity of Staff and Volunteers

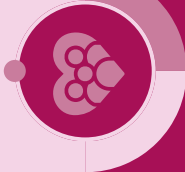
PRIORITY 2: COMMUNICATION, PUBLICITY & BRANDING



SG4 Toward a recognizable "brand" for Birth forward through wider outreach, more targeted communication, publicity and branding/communication

SG5 Strengthen cooperation with other NGOs, State institutions, Academic Institutions and other relevantstake holders

PRIORITY 3: SUPPORT & EDUCATE the Community



SG6 Inform and educate both parents/parent to be communities and competent professional; ensure accessible information and education

SG7 Provide first line support and connect to multidisciplinary support structures

PRIORITY 4: ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE



SG8 Build & strengthen multidisciplinary alliances through national and European networks and joining national working groups

SG9 Further expand ongoing Advocacy & Lobbying efforts to improve current practices and guidelines in line with extant guidelines and human rights.

internal

external

CODE OF ETHICS

In 2024 we prioritized an important matter: **Ethics**:

We secured consultancy & facilitation from NGO legal expert Eleni Karaoli and organized an Ethics workshop in February 2024 with the Board, staff and volunteers, followed by a series of consultancy meetings throughout the years. the resulting Ethics Package (Code of Ethics and Conduct), including the suggested implementation and monitoring procedure, which was presented in more detail, discussed adapted and approved in the 2024 AGM.

While working on our governance and strategic and structural priorities (strategy and ethics), and while at the same time being aware of developments in the external environment such as increasing legal and bureaucratic demands for NGOs, with support from our Organizational Consultant Eleni Karaoli and following review at the Administrative Board (AB), we have identified amendments required in our Constitution in order to conform with current legislation. We have addressed these in the drafts shared.

The AB also proposed two (2) additional suggestions for Constitutional amendments to secure more efficient governance and clarify operations. These were presented and voted during the 2024 Constitutional Assembly section of the 2024 AGM.



PROJECTS IN 2024

In our organization's life cycle, our work started with few resources and a large ambition: to build and strengthen communities of parents and perinatal health professionals in Cyprus,

We gradually moved into bigger project work, aiming to produce tools and outputs useful to this end: One big milestone was the Baby Buddy Forward KA2 Erasmus+ project, which launched in 2017 and concluded in 2020, resulting in the Baby Buddy platform babybuddy.com.cy,

By 2024, we have sustained and increased this dynamic, working with 4 co-funded projects, securing budgets which allowed us to put together a small team of 2 staff and several external consultants.

4

ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2024



101096681 — RESPECT — CERV-2022-DAPHNE
 APRIL 2023-MARCH 2025 (24 MONTHS) € 425044.58



CERV-BUILD-CY-B04 - RespectWATCH
 MAY 2024-APRIL 2024 (12 MONTHS) € 59087.70



101161382 MIND THE MUM — EU4H-2023-PJ
 OCT2024-SEPT 2027 (36 MONTHS) € 586036.87



BABY BUDDY COMMUNICATORS
 2022-1-CY01-KA210-VET-000084120
 OCT2022-SEPT 2024 (26 MONTHS) € 60000



BABY BUDDY COMMUNICATORS

Launched in 2022 and concluded in 2024, the project “Baby Buddy Communicators” project aimed to enhance the communication skills of practicing and in-training midwives that aid them in providing midwifery services of high standards. BF is the Coordinator for this project, in partnership with Cyprus University of Technology, Ghostthinker GmbH and Humboldt-Universitaet Zu Berlin (Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin).

Birth Forward, representing the voice of the user and the holder of the experience, through the mothers who participated, worked with the trainers (educators from Cyprus University of Technology) to formulate scenarios mirroring clinical reality on topics with real-life relevance, that included elective c-sections, postpartum mental health, breastfeeding, premature labor.

Then, mothers with personal, “lived” experience with these topics, became “actors” who role-played with the midwives (both practicing and in-training). The mothers then “evaluated” the experience, providing feedback to the practicing and in-training midwives that is of real-life value, targeted at further sharpening their communication skills. Feedback was initially provided in person, following the end of the role-plays, then continued asynchronously online, in the educational platform applied to this project (Edubreak® Campus) where the recorded performances were uploaded.

In September 2024, we submitted the project to be considered for Boussias Awards, in the category **“Contribution to Health by an NGO”**, resulting later in the Bronze Award in this category, awarded during a ceremony in February 2025.

BABY BUDDY COMMUNICATORS

A socially interactive crosssectoral communication skills-building training for competent antenatal educators who **"MAKE EVERY CONTACT COUNT"**.

4

scenarios depicting real life health professional-mother communication challenges



breastfeeding



cesarean



prematurity



mental health

videoconferencing

CONSORTIUM



Parents, the "holders of the experience"



The trainers (academics)



The digital experts (open formal learning)



PROJECT ACTIVITIES



Activity 1
"From the Trainers"
Leading competences in team learning with social skills



Activity 2
"From the Mentors"
Practice and reflection with peer and service user feedback

Activity 3
"From the Students"
Encouraging communication skills in videoconferencing digital scenarios

INNOVATIONS

A NEW PARADIGM
for learning communication skills
Health professionals, trainers, academics and patients learn together from each other

Blended in person & Digital interaction
In person simulated scenarios and feedback exchanged
Now also videoconferencing in digital learning space
Feedback and learning exchange continues through videoconferencing



"TRAIN THE MENTORS"

5

week course for practicing midwives

8

8 assignments

7 educators

4 "actors"



"TRAIN THE STUDENTS"

8

week course for 7 CUT midwifery students

10 assignments

4 trained mentors

3 "actors"



participants OVERCOMING challenges

FEEDBACK PROCESS examples



Reading: 1 week (10 days)



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 Google](#)



1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 26

"I was pleasantly surprised about the attitude of participating the challenge as participants had very good communication with the healthcare provider and valued the experience. Learning recognized as an opportunity for growth. Despite the initial anxiety, I felt empowered."

The students shared personal feedback about their course and their experience. The students shared their feedback with the course team and the course was improved accordingly.

The researchers did not distinguish between different types of activities during the observation period.

IMPACT-LEARNING

Feedback allowed participants to understand why their communication skills were perceived by others and they identified areas for improvement.

- **strongly correlated with** **country's culture**
- **constructive** & **strong** **goal to its people**
- **opportunity to** **eliminate** & **transform** **structure of their** **corporate culture**

Source: author's calculations.
 Estimated using the
 two-stage least squares (2SLS) method.

*Totally, I understand myself
this is positive, the warmest things I got and what my specialty is,
we are all the same, happy and good, we created*

That something is a private question and is not yet asked
 forget yourself just instantly. For private questions to be asked
 the act of my hands without reading the code is so much, during the speech
 the act of my hands without reading the code is so much, during the speech

Moreover, I did not ask the woman's feelings because I thought Susan wanted me to know about her and they did not mean me it was a shame if she had any problems.

Warning: One of the whole points is not only not to over-stress, but also to not over-exercise. For this reason, don't do too much.

As I mentioned at the end of the "construction",
spurred from the fact that my history was not related in order for me to construct,
pulling myself in the process of thinking that "I am free"
and "I am not a free man".

The dangers of transgenic bacteria were not recognized to include the

And, again, due to trusting, you did not let the egoist say, "I am a good person, and that means others love and need me. I am personally doing something, you are just a defense attitude, and it would have been more correct if you'd been a proper student, who is it clearly to let her egoist herself, to see what she can and cannot do for herself."

CHANGING MINDSET



40% major source of the value of customer relationships and more confident in their readiness to respond with empathy in critical situations.

Convert Theory to Practice
Opportunity to practice, make mistakes, reflect and learn.
Distinguish between what you know and what you do

Parents, that was 1975.
With some sympathy
they put in some checks on
teachers who often needed
something good
and a distraction.

- Also address communication with colleagues observe through and why norms discuss introducing seminars and obtaining feedback/ reflection practices in their clinical settings

These considerations, together with the fact that the β -phase is the stable phase at low temperatures, suggest that the β -phase is the stable phase at low temperatures.

**BETTER Health
Communications in CYPRUS**

IMPACT in real midwifery practice

"There I really began to change the way I perceived things, things, and things, and the way I thought about the way I thought about things."

A few days after the workshop, a participant commented a very positive outcome: the changed her usual response after the training, she used open questionnaires. The water seemed to get evaporative from situations.

"I think that's an important
point, collecting good
feedback on music, not
just good or a difference."



Our organisation remains committed to advancing the principles of Respectful Maternity Care (RMC), as outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO), with a specific focus on Shared Decision Making (SDM) and Informed Choice. These principles are integral to establishing a culture of respect and dignity in maternity care and serve as a primary prevention strategy against obstetric violence (OBV).

The foundation of this initiative is grounded in the Socio-Ecological Model of Influences on Human Behaviour, which highlights the interplay between individual, interpersonal, community, and societal factors. Additionally, the Capability-Opportunity-Motivation-Behaviour (COM-B) model of behavioural change provides a structured approach to understanding and addressing the factors that influence the actions of both providers and recipients of maternity care.





δωρεάν



ΦΡΟΝΤΙΔΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΜΕ ΣΕΒΑΣΜΟ

πρόγραμμα προετοιμασίας-ενδυνάμωσης για μητέρες



Έναρξη 14 Ιανουαρίου 2025 και
για Τρίτη στις 17.00
(5 συναντήσεις)



ΛΕΜΕΣΟΣ
Μισιαούλη & Καβάζογλου 23, 3017
(Πολύκεντρο Οργανισμού Νεολαίας)



Εγγραφές /πληροφορίες [εδώ](mailto:respect@birthforward.com)
respect@birthforward.com



ΣΥΝΤΟΝΙΣΜΟΣ:
Ηρακλειδία Παπαηρακλειδίου,
μαία, ερευνητική συνεργάτιδα
RESPECT



With the RESPECT project, which commenced in 2023 and subsequently with its continuation RespectWATCH we have paved the path and began to change the narrative together.

It all started with the voices women themselves, placing them at the very core, as the maternity care end-users and “holders of the experience”. They trusted us, we listened, we recorded their experiences, we mapped their needs through research and documentation, compiled into National and Synthesis reports.

Then we reached out to all stakeholders involved in maternity care. We invited perinatal health professionals, competent authorities, civil societies, academics, Commissioners, decision makers, mothers and mother to be, to become part of this journey. Stakeholders responded and joined the conversation, some as long-term allies, some for the first time, and strengthened our voice and our alliances.

During our **Stakeholder Meetings** and events throughout the year, we identified common values, we exchanged concerns, we put together joint statements and plans. We formed and strengthened alliances toward a more Respectful Maternity Care experience for all women.

We responded to the needs the mothers communicated to us. We put together and piloted **empowerment programs for mothers**, through **face to face groups** and through **e-courses**, and , the mothers, embraced it. We adapted skills building programs for health professionals to sharpen their communication and shared decision making skills and you, the health professionals, joined, you asked for more. Strengthened by the alliances we have build in these efforts, we are now working to ensure these programs become sustainable, so they can reach more women.

Embedding Respectful Maternity Care (RMC) into Practice 2024 marked a year of strengthened structure and strategy for advancing RMC in Cyprus. Through a combination of research, collaboration, and targeted education, we translated rights-based values into tangible tools and actions that support systemic change.

Research-Informed Action

Evidence has guided our direction throughout the year. Our research captured the experiences of women and birthing people in Cyprus, while also shedding light on the constraints and needs of healthcare providers. This included analysis of narratives submitted to the RespectWATCH platform, stakeholder mapping, and thematic reviews of case reports. These findings directly informed our advocacy priorities, training design, and public campaigns.

Concrete Tools and Training Outputs

We developed and launched a suite of tools that remain publicly accessible and designed for wide use:

- An e-course on Respectful Maternity Care (tailored for pregnant women and parents), accessible online, empowering individuals to understand their rights and navigate maternity care.
- A Charter-Based Toolkit and Checklists for Informed Consent, targeting clinical staff.
- Training curricula designed and piloted for healthcare professionals, co-developed with legal and rights experts.
- Training sessions and workshops conducted across 2 districts, with over 95 midwives, doctors, and medical students reached directly.
- A Watchdog Reporting Platform was established, equipped with coding tools and SOPs, allowing individuals to report rights violations and institutions to use aggregated data for self-assessment or audit.

Collaborative Strategy Development

The creation of the National Committee on RMC stands as a major collaborative milestone. Bringing together institutional actors, medical bodies, civil society representatives, and legal advisors, the committee co-developed the National Action Plan on RMC, launched in late 2024. This plan lays the groundwork for institutional accountability, long-term monitoring, and inclusion of RMC principles in national healthcare policy frameworks.



Empowerment and Rights Awareness

We invested in rights-based education for key stakeholders:

- Our training sessions provided over 120 participants (students, parents, HCPs) with interactive learning experiences on autonomy, consent, and dignity in care.
- Materials and visual infographics were disseminated both online and at community events, reaching an estimated 11,000 individuals, including vulnerable or underrepresented groups

Impact and Outlook

Our work in 2024 positioned Birth Forward as a strategic actor in policy-shaping, professional training, and public awareness around maternity care. The tools produced are not only being used by healthcare professionals and patient groups in Cyprus, but have also drawn interest from European advocacy networks.

Looking ahead, we aim to expand our training to cover all districts, deepen partnerships with academic institutions for curriculum integration, and continue embedding dignity and rights in every step of the maternity care journey.



RespectWATCH

Launched in May 2024, the RespectWATCH project extends the Respect project with a strong Advocacy addition. Funded through the National CERV Regranting Scheme “BUILD” operated by the Bodossaki Foundation in Greece and the NGO-Support Center in Cyprus, for the project **“RespectWATCH: Developing an Advocacy Strategy and WatchDog Mechanisms to ensure Respectful Maternity Care (RMC) in Cyprus”**, which will commence in May 2024.

The study visit to Zagreb, Croatia, offered crucial insights into integrating mental health support within maternal healthcare, highlighting the need for psychological services in maternity units to address birth trauma and peripartum depression. The impact of COVID-19 on maternal mental health awareness was evident, emphasizing the demand for sustained psychological support. Additionally, Croatia's geographical challenges in healthcare access, particularly for remote and island communities, underscored the importance of innovative solutions to ensure equitable mental health services. These lessons will inform the development of advocacy strategies and healthcare policies to improve maternal care in Cyprus through the RespectWATCH project.

Other planned actions for RespectWATCH include developing tools and procedures to support the implementation of a watchdog mechanism, launching an online complaints platform, and preparing reports for authorities at both national and European levels. Additionally, stakeholder meetings, social media campaigns, and workshops will be organized to disseminate findings and raise public awareness. Continuous monitoring and refinement of the tools will ensure their effectiveness, with all efforts culminating in comprehensive reports summarizing the impact and advocacy outcomes. These actions aim to strengthen engagement with policymakers, healthcare professionals, and the broader community in promoting Respectful Maternity Care (RMC).

Promoting Perinatal Mental Health in Cyprus

The Mind the Mum project focuses on improving Perinatal Mental Health (PMH) by addressing two major gaps: understanding how the perinatal period is experienced and developing tools to support mothers. This EU-funded initiative brings together experts and grassroots activists from various countries to create systemic change and empower new mothers.

Project's Objectives:

1. Research & Understanding: Conduct nationwide research in Cyprus and Slovenia to identify specific perinatal mental health (PMH) needs, challenges, and risk factors.
2. Strengthening Alliances: Build partnerships among healthcare professionals, policymakers, and parent advocates to co-design effective tools for prevention and management.
3. Piloting Interventions: Test and evaluate tailored programmes that empower mothers with the skills and resources needed to protect and enhance their mental wellbeing.
4. Advocacy & Policy: Promote reforms in healthcare policy and professional training to address maternal mental health conditions such as postpartum depression, anxiety, and birth-related trauma.
5. Awareness & Destigmatization: Raise public awareness, reduce stigma, and foster open dialogue around perinatal mental health.

Kick-Off and Next Steps

The project was officially launched in October 2024 with a two-day kick-off meeting held in Ljubljana, Slovenia (8-9 October 2024), bringing together all partners to align on goals, methodology, and timelines.

The Cyprus and Slovenian teams will soon initiate a national research study inviting women who have recently given birth to share their experiences with perinatal mental health. The study will combine questionnaire and focus groups to document lived experiences, forming the evidence base for future interventions and recommendations. The project will run until September 2027.

MIND THE MUM



Project Consortium

Coordinator:

- Department of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences, Cyprus University of Technology
- www.cut.ac.cy/faculties/hsc/nur

Partners:

- Birth Forward (Cyprus) - www.birthforward.com
- Institute Umbilika (Slovenia) - <https://umbilica.si>
- University of Gdańsk (Poland) - <https://ug.edu.pl>
- European Institute of Perinatal Mental Health (Spain) - <https://saludmentalperinatal.es>

The project is co-funded under the EU4Health Programme - Priority on Mental Health,

The project is committed to creating a supportive, accessible, and comprehensive mental health care system for all mothers in Cyprus.

Mind the Mum (ref. 101161382- EU4H-2023-PJ)



EVENTS & PRESENCE 2024

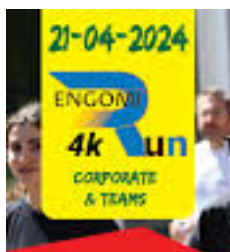
MARCH

Mum & Baby Show 2024



APRIL

Engomi VBAC Run



MAY

3RD Femme Fest



JUNE

Cyprus Pride



SEPTEMBER

NGO Fair at 8th
"Up to You(th)" Fest



OCTOBER

Simultaneous
Breastfeeding

"Three voices"
post-play discussion

EVENTS & PRESENCE

At Birth Forward, we actively engage with the community, ensuring a constant and meaningful presence at collective NGO and partner initiatives. Our participation in key events throughout the year underscores our commitment to fostering awareness, collaboration, and advocacy for respectful maternity care and maternal health rights.

As March 2024 kicked off, we proudly took part in the annual **Mom and Baby Show**, an essential gathering for expecting mothers and families seeking expert advice and access to maternity and baby care products and services.

The Baby Show is the largest event for maternity and baby product/christening vendors organized for the last 13 years in Cyprus, featuring over 45 exhibitors and for 2024 attracted over 1500 visitors from all over Cyprus (most expecting parents, as well as a few grandparents and godparents). Mostly used as a platform for retailers to showcase their products for christening and baby events, with our presence we came into direct contact with the community of new parents and their support networks, informing them about our mission and work and the perinatal health situation in Cyprus.



EVENTS & PRESENCE

April brought the Engomi Run 2024, an event that unites the local community in support of health, fitness, and promoting social causes. As April is VBAC month, (Vaginal Birth After Cesarean) our team focused for one more year on this cause.

A remarkable group of health professionals, activists, and VBAC mothers came together, donned the Birth Forward shirts with the motto "Vaginal Birth After Cesarean is a safe option!" united by their passion and commitment to change the narrative around childbirth and spread the message among the crowd.

This heartfelt initiative was beautifully led and organised by Krasi Kirilova, a long time member, supporter and midwife. Krasi earned second place in her category—a victory that amplified her voice and the cause she so passionately champions.

She was joined by the following stellar team of professionals and mothers who inspire change every day:

Dr. Giorgos Georgiou, Obstetrician-Gynecologist;
Dr. Constantinos Christodoulides, Pediatrician;
Dr. Iliana Aristeidou, Pediatrician and proud VBAC mom;
midwives Kalli Tsangari, Ioanna Loizidou, Maria Adamou, and Nikoleta Paraskevopoulou;
Dr. Ioli Orphanide, Birth Forward Spokesperson on Respectful Maternity Care and VBAC mom;
VBAC mothers Tatiana Michail Mateou and Stella Meli.

These dedicated individuals ran not just with their feet, but with their hearts, bringing hope and awareness to women and families. Their participation is a testament to the power of teamwork and advocacy, reminding us all of our vital role in creating a more respectful, informed, and supportive maternity care system. To everyone who wore BF's colours that day and championed the message: thank you for your tireless commitment to empowering women and shaping a brighter future for maternity care in Cyprus.





EVENTS & PRESENCE

In **May**, our team joined the **3rd Femme Fest 2024**, celebration of women's achievements and a platform for empowerment through arts, education, and activism. From our information booth, we played games and informed participants on our work and the perinatal health and rights situation in Cyprus.

Additionally our team (Researcher/Midwife **Iraklideia Papairaklideiou** and our CEO **Margarita Kapsou**) was invited to facilitate a workshop titled "Woman and Obstetric Violence: Paving the way to Respectful Maternity Care" in the context of the Respect project, which was constituted the first empowerment intervention of the project, which later in the year evolved into a full fledged Empowerment program for expecting and new mothers.

On **1st June 2024** we joined the annual **Cyprus Pride** march and Pride events. Our organization is proud to support all families, including Rainbow Families, and join their call in claiming equitable recognition and rights as parents.

Also on **28 September 2024** we joined for one more year the **NGO fair** organized in the context of the 8th annual **"Up to You(th)"** an event that brings together young people through music, arts, and activism. Among 70 organizations, we connected with other NGOS as well as young people and families who joined the festival, fostering awareness of reproductive rights, respectful maternity care and informed decision-making. The event attracts over 5,000 young people and young families every year.



EVENTS & PRESENCE

The Simultaneous Breastfeeding event, a significant annual event organized by the Pancyprrian Breastfeeding Association “Gift for Life”, this year took place on **12 October 2024** and included a panel of experts and decision makers. We were there to disseminate our informational material, advocate for policies to support breastfeeding and we joined the panel through our Spokesperson **Ioli Orphanide**.

On **October 29th**, following the play “**Three Voices**” our **Spokesperson Ioli Orphanide** and **CEO Margarita Kapsou**, were invited by producer and long term friend of our organization **Maria Iole Karolidou** in a discussion titled “Pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum: How we create safe spaces for sharing women’s experience”.

The play, building on Sylvia Path’s poem by the same name, build on experiences around pregnancy and motherhood shared by women in Cyprus, following a questionnaire and announcement shared by our social media.

Through active engagement in these community-driven events, Birth Forward continues to solidify its presence as a trusted advocate for maternal and infant health. These opportunities not only amplify our message but also foster meaningful partnerships and connections with other organizations and the public, furthering our commitment to building a supportive and informed society.

Συντονιστείτε!



TPITH 23-04-2024



accept
LGBT CYPRUS

IS SUPPORTED BY THE
FOLLOWING REPUTABLE NGO'S:



AIDS
SOLIDARITY
MOVEMENT



CYPRUS
FAMILY
PLANNING
ASSOCIATION



WOMEN
OF CYPRUS



QUEER
CYPRUS



AFRICAN
RAINBOW
FAMILY
LGBTQ EQUALITY



University of Cyprus
Diversity, Equality and
Inclusivity Office



οίκος της γης
Cyprus
Friends of the Earth



kisa
Κέντρο Στήριξης, Ανταρραγωγής
Equality, Support, Antiracism



CYPRUS
REFUGEE
COUNCIL



Center for Social
Innovation



CARDET



**STAND UP
AGAINST
HOMOPHOBIA
TODAY!**

17 MAY 2024



SUITEX,
DEBEROYU, NICOSIA



18:00

JOIN US IN PROMOTING
LOVE AND EQUALITY
FOR ALL!



**2024
BABY SHOW**

MATERNITY, BABY,
CHRISTENING

SUNDAY
03/03/2024
10:30 - 19:30



HILTON HOTEL NICOSIA

More information :
www.babyshow.cy



birth
forward



Τρεις Φωνές



Τρίτη 29.10.2024 | Κτήριο 53 | Μετά την παράσταση



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MEDIA & VISIBILITY

In 2024, Birth Forward continued to strengthen its public presence and deepen its engagement with diverse audiences through a multifaceted communication strategy. We combined traditional and digital media outreach, community-driven storytelling, and targeted campaigns, the organisation elevated key messages related to respectful maternity care, perinatal mental health, and informed decision-making.

In our public presence, we work to ensure that the voices of mothers, families, professionals, and advocates were visible, heard, and increasingly influential in shaping public discourse and policy. Each communication stream contributed to building a stronger, more informed, and more connected community around reproductive rights and family support.

Media Presence

Throughout 2024, the RESPECT project maintained a strong presence in mainstream and digital media, heightening public awareness around Respectful Maternity Care (RMC).

Stakeholder meetings which took place in March and September were featured in the press, while later in the year, the onset of Rights-based Empowerment sessions for mothers in the context of the Respect project were also well featured and shared, with the contribution of an important partnership formed by the Youth Board of Cyprus for this cause, who co-hosted the event, provided complimentary spaces in Nicosia and Limassol and also offered its youth centers islandwide for continuing to offer the program.

LIVES AND PODCASTS

We continued to keep our community and networks engaged with Facebook Lives. We hosted our members:

Barbara Karafokas | Jan. 9th 2024 | Breastfeeding Nutrition

Grace Rajeh, midwife, founder of Belnaissance | Jan. 22, |

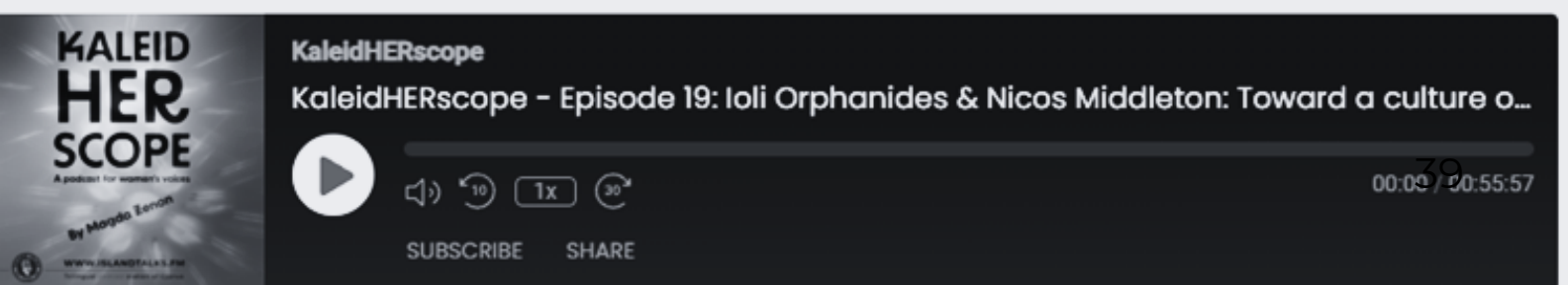
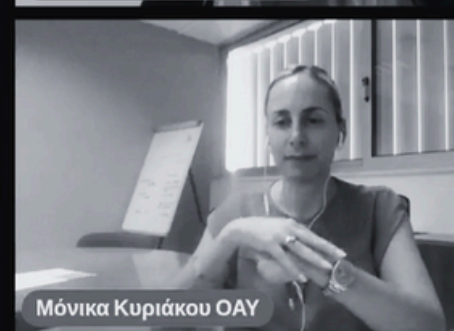
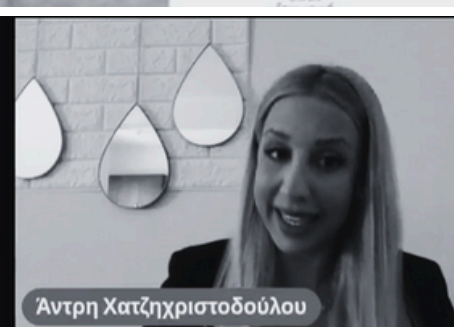
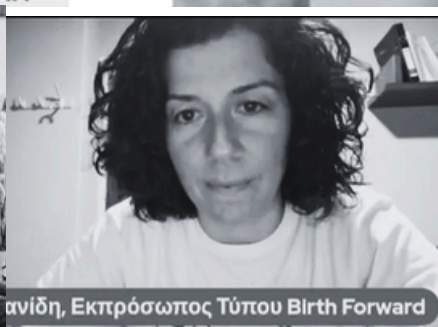
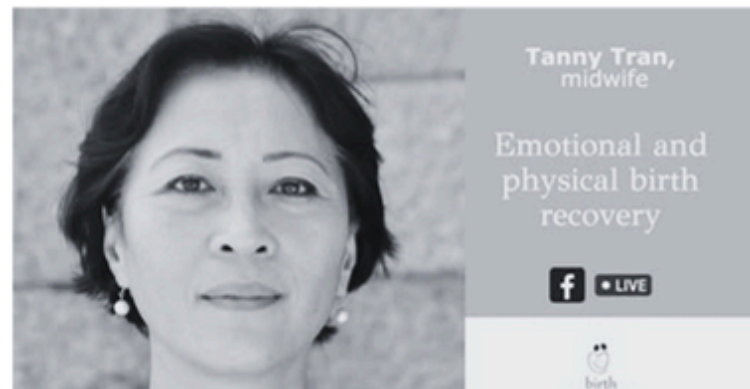
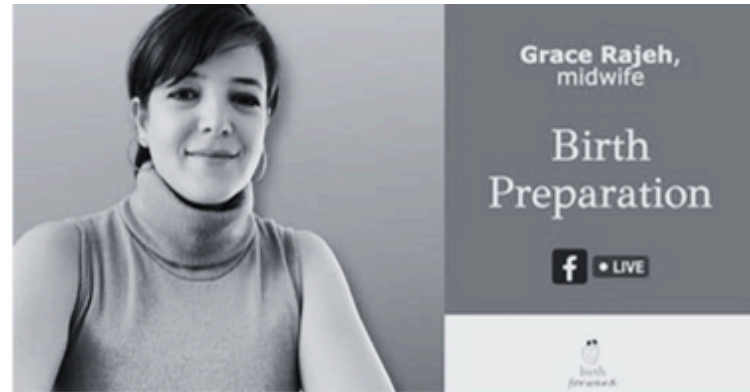
Choosing your healthcare provider, preparing a birth plan and more

Tanny Tran | Mar 11th 2024 | Birth recovery: physical and mental |

Responding to current affairs and developments, in 22 July we organized a highly engaging live on the ongoing discussions about the announced NHS (OAY) plans to tackle the high rate of C-sections through monetary incentives and counter-incentives to OB-GYN practitioners. The live was moderated by journalist Andri Hadjichristodoulou and joined by our **Dr. Andreas Mavrides**, OB-GYN NHS Senior Officer **Monika Kyriakou** and our Spokesperson **Ioli Orphanide**, stimulating lots of discussion.

Following the Respect project's research conclusions, Scientific Coordinator **Dr. Nicos Middleton** and our Spokesperson **Ioli Orphanide** discussed with host **Madga Zenon** about the project, its objectives, the Respectful Maternity Care (RMC) framework and what findings are telling us so far about how women in Cyprus are experiencing quality of maternity care and participation in shared decision making.

In December 2024, our CEO **Margarita Kapsou** and Respect Researcher and Midwife **Iraklideia Papairaklideiou**, joined **The Mamma Mu podcast**, hosted by Eleni Antoniou, to present key findings from various initiatives related to maternal care. Our discussion included topics such as the medicalisation of childbirth, obstetric violence in Cyprus, and alliance building between professionals and civil society actors working to improve perinatal experiences.



MEDIA & VISIBILITY

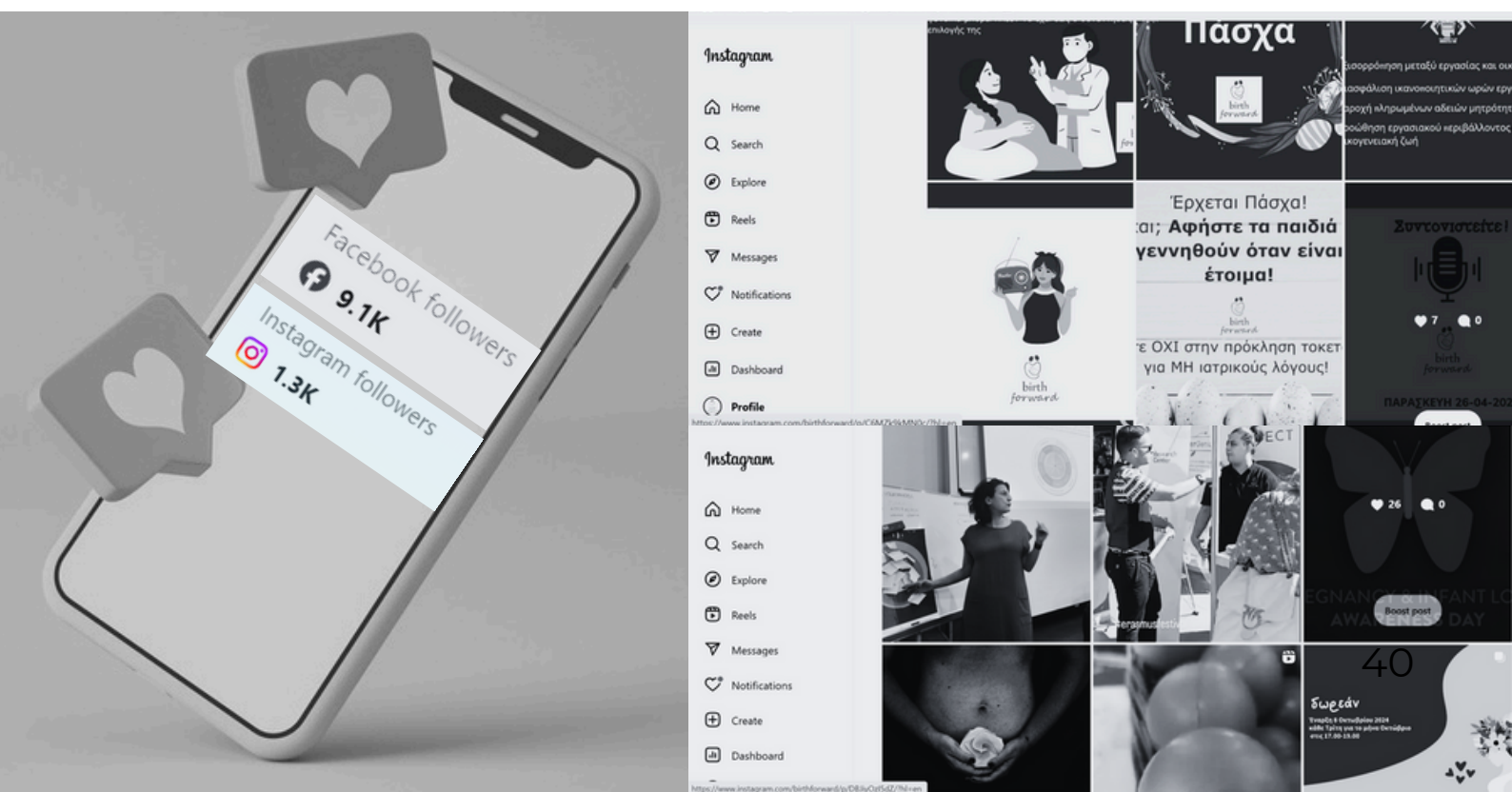
Social Media

Birth Forward maintained an active and consistent presence across its social media platforms, primarily Facebook and Instagram, to amplify the visibility of its ongoing initiatives – Mind the Mum, Baby Buddy Communicators, RESPECT, and RespectWATCH.

As of the end of the year, the organisation reached over **9,100** followers on Facebook and **1,300** on Instagram.

Over a 28-day period, posts on Facebook achieved a reach of 7,273 users, with 635 recorded interactions and 11 new page likes. Social media was utilised not only to share campaign updates and calls to action, but also to foster conversations on respectful maternity care, perinatal mental health, and informed choice. The platforms served as crucial tools for building awareness, reducing stigma, and engaging diverse audiences in ongoing dialogue around maternal wellbeing.

We also continue to update our **website** with information relevant to parents, health care professionals, our project outputs and our new content.



ADVOCACY & NETWORKS

Our vision and mission at Birth Forward are not isolated ones; we work in partnership and alliance and within a broader culture of other human-rights focused Civil Society Organizations and stakeholders. Working in unison and forming collaborative alliances is what we consider the way to grow our strength and impact. We have therefore strongly invested in solidifying our already existing partnerships, and further expanding and also formalizing new ones.

During the past year, we have capitalized on and continue to strengthen our strong collaboration with the **Cyprus Federation of Patients Associations (CyFPA/OSAK)**. We became connected CyFPA members in 2022. Through this membership we have secured our representation as a health user's advocate in several ways. Our Spokesperson Ioli Orphanide represents CyFPA in the **Monitoring Committee for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Promoting Natural Birth and Reducing Prematurity**.

Our President **Giota Doukanari** and our Spokesperson **Ioli Orphanide** also represented the service user's perspective during the contextualization of the NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) clinical guidelines for "C-sections" for Cyprus, while our organisation contributed with comments during the public consultation.

CyFPA's support in our efforts to represent the voice of women and parents as perinatal health system users with lived experience in these committees is pivotal, as they have taken up supporting and addressing several challenges we have identified so far.



In 2024, we strengthened and solidified our networking with national allies, as follows:

We became a member of the **Cyprus Women's Lobby (CWL)**, joining forces with sister organization's working on women's rights, while ultimately connecting our work with the broader family of the European Women's Lobby. The CWL brings together 16 women's organizations working together in shaping policies around women's rights, gender-based violence, economic inequality, and improving women's access to health services, aligning with broader European goals for gender justice and women's rights.

We also became a member of the **Pancyprrian Volunteerism Coordinating Council (PVCC)**, joining forces with other volunteer and humanitarian organizations (in your pack you will find a feature article for Birth Forward which was included in their magazine in September).

We applied to join the **National Machinery of Women's Rights (NMWR)**. This is still pending due to recent legal changes in the status of the Equality Commissioner who presides over the Mechanism, and we will follow up on this in early 2025. However, it is worth noting that our collaboration with the Equality Commissioner's Office and staff in the context of our projects (especially Respect and RespectWATCH) has already been strengthened.

We continue to stay connected with the local NGO community and identify opportunities to strengthen but also formalize our alliances.

On a less formal basis, and/or in the context of ongoing or proposed projects, (on a national level) we have also started reaching out to various other stakeholders, such as competent authorities (e.g. Ministries, MoH), professional associations (physicians, midwives), through for example Respect project's stakeholder's meetings, but also unions and employer's bodies in the context of dialogue to improve work and family life balance.

We also strive to maintain and expand our connections on a regional, European and international level. In 2023 we became members of the **Anna Lindh Foundation EuroMed** for fostering intercultural dialogue and collaboration between North and South of the Mediterranean, with small grant and training support opportunities.

We have been part of the COST action, as well as informal structures such as the **International Roundtable of Human Rights in Childbirth Organizations**, which meets online about twice a year. During 2024, the latter has held several ad hoc meetings in response to the global ongoing debate about terminology regarding the term "Obstetric Violence", "human rights violations in childbirth" and "Respectful Maternity Care", which is facing strong backlash from the medical community (medical associations worldwide), and we have joined forces to author statements and journal articles defending the need for the term.

Through our networks, we participated in various consultations with Ministries-Authorities, such as the PVCC consultations with Ministry of Health and Deputy Minister of Social Welfare. Our engagement extended beyond health policy into broader civic and legislative reform. As active participants in the 10th Civil Society Forum (21 October 2024), we reaffirmed our commitment to inclusive civic dialogue and democratic participation.

MONITORING ADVOCACY DEVELOPMENTS

Throughout the year, we monitored and engaged in ongoing national discussions on the revision of the NGO and Lobbyist Laws, as well as the regulatory framework surrounding healthcare. In 2024 national media attention also focused around controversies around surrogacy (with some positions claiming it as a reproductive choice rights while others as a form of commodification for women's bodies), and especially toward the end of the year, state support for parents, particularly after the State Announced "Measures for Demographic Recovery", an announcement that received criticism for focusing on incentives for more births rather than parental support and for focusing on financial incentives, especially age-based ones (with financial motives for mothers under 30). Media attention also related to healthcare quality assurance and complaints mechanisms, especially within the National Healthcare System (GeSY).

At the European level, 2024 saw significant developments around the issue of **Obstetric Violence**. Several important European-commissioned reports were published, included:

A study requested by the FEMM Committee on **"Obstetric and Gynaecological Violence in the EU - Prevalence, Legal Frameworks, and Educational Guidelines for Prevention and Elimination"** (Brunello et al., 2024).

The Scientific Analysis and Advice on Gender Equality in the EU project (SAAGE), coordinated by Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini and funded by the European Commission, published the study **Obstetric Violence in the European Union: Situational Analysis and Policy Recommendations** (Quattrocchi, 2024).

MONITORING ADVOCACY DEVELOPMENTS

The SAAGE network—Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (European Commission), Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini (FGB), and the Scientific Analysis and Advice on Gender Equality in the EU (SAAGE)—also brought together experts in gender equality to inform and support European Union-level policy initiatives by providing expertise and knowledge on both relevant wide-ranging political issues and technical matters through four case studies. The report **“Case Studies on Obstetric Violence: Experience, Analysis, and Responses”** (Rozée, V., Schantz, C. et al., 2024) presents and analyzes cases from France, the Netherlands, Slovakia, and Spain.

Parallel to - and intensified by these publications, 2024 marked an intensified debate between the medical and human rights communities on matters of terminology. A terminological debate was reignited after a Joint Position Statement (JPS) by medical associations was published in the European Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, calling for the replacement of the term **“Obstetric Violence”** with **“Disrespectful & Substandard Care”** leading to a series of journal exchanges between human rights activists and medical associations throughout the year.

EU level advocacy in 2024 also focused on abortion rights, especially with the **“My Voice, My Choice” campaign**, which our organization and other allies supported through social media and physical dissemination.

Through all these spaces, Birth Forward reaffirmed its commitment to informed policy-making and systemic accountability—grounded in collaboration, equity, and the voices of the communities we serve.



ΠΑΡΚΥΤΙΠΙΟ ΕΥΝΤΟ
ΕΓΓΕΛΑΟΡ

**MY VOICE
MY CHOICE**

**SIGN FOR SAFE
AND ACCESSIBLE
ABORTION IN THE EU!**



BUILDING OUR CAPACITY

In 2024, our team took part in several valuable capacity-building sessions that enhanced our skills in advocacy, communications, fundraising, and project implementation. Some highlights include:

March 2024: We attended the PLACE Program, capacity building sessions which brought together NGOs from both the Greek- and Turkish-speaking communities of Cyprus.

The training focused on crafting strong advocacy strategies and presenting our initiatives persuasively to potential donors. This experience allowed us to sharpen our advocacy skills and gain practical tools for approaching new funding opportunities.

June 2024: We participated in the **WePoDS training** for creating engaging podcasts organized by our partner MIGS in the context of the BUILD program. Beyond social media strategy, this training introduced the technical requirements of producing high-quality podcasts, including how to use different platforms, as well as selecting the right microphone, headsets, and other equipment. These new skills will help us broaden our communications outreach and explore more interactive ways to share our message.

June 2024: **CSR**

March-December 2024 and ongoing: Through the BUILD programme, which funds our RespectWATCH project we engaged in several capacity building opportunities, pertaining to topics such as fundraising, project execution, human rights topics and organizational functioning. We joined the one-to-one coaching and mentoring program, providing guidance on our daily operations, funding diversification efforts, successfully implementing funded projects. These insights will help us navigate funding processes more effectively and strengthen our capacity to deliver high-impact initiatives going forward.

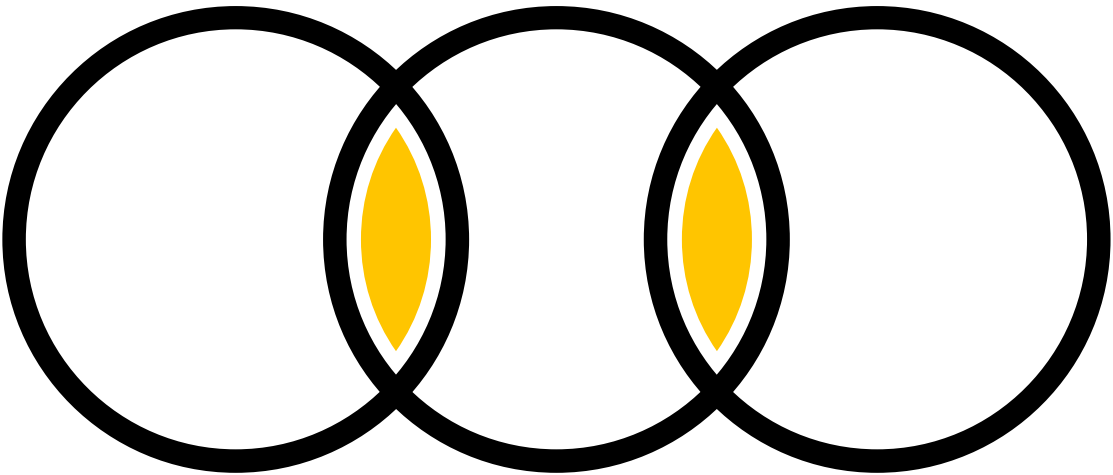
FINANCIALS: OUR FIGURES

2024

€89.654

€77.102

€12.552

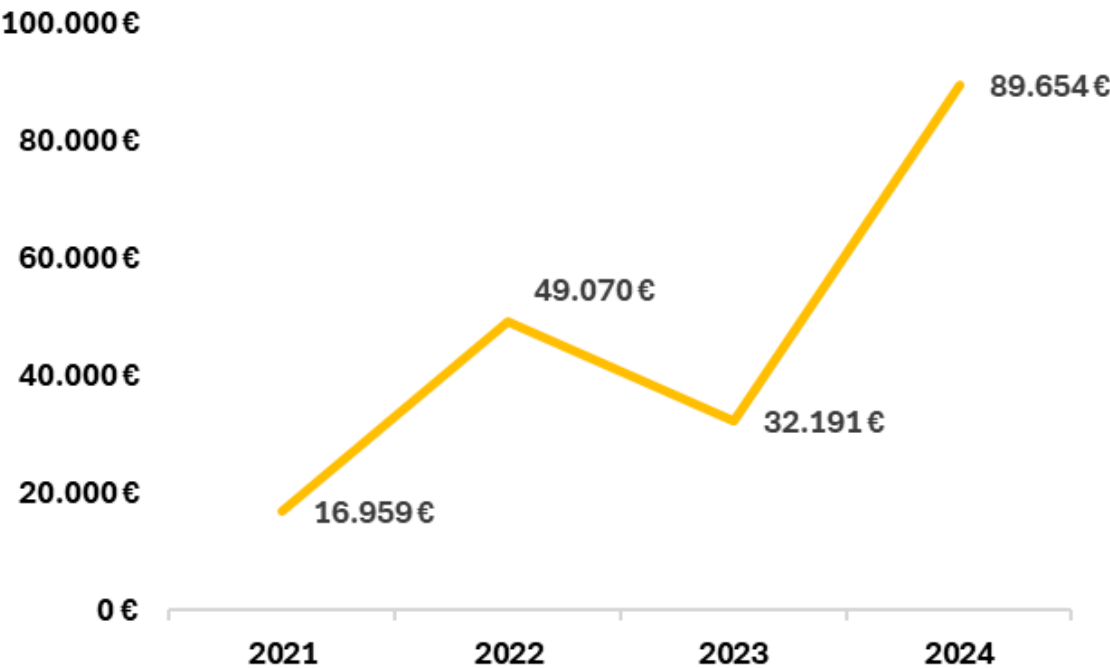


INCOME

EXPENSES

SURPLUS

BF Annual Revenue



FINANCIALS: OUR FIGURES

In **2024** our main income source was European co-funded projects The CERV-Daphne Respect that continued into 2024 and will wrap in 2025, the RespectWATCH project which commenced in May 2024 through the CERV-Daphne regranting program BUILD, operated by the Bodossaki Foundation and the NGO-support center, and the new EU4Health Mind the Mum project “Mind the Mum”, tackling maternal mental health, as well as Membership fees and donations.

Expenses concerned primarily staff salaries, professional fees, travelling for projects, marketing, promotion, social media and website expenses, depreciation and various other expenses primarily pertaining to purchases for project activities such as supplies, promotional material, catering for events and other.

What is notable for 2024, as also shown in the second graph, is the significant increase in financial operations and annual revenue compared to previous years. This is thanks to the substantial funding we secured through projects and it is what allowed our Association to employ its own staff after several years of relying primarily on volunteers.

The challenge for the Birth Forward team now is to sustain and continue to improve this level of revenue. For the year 2025 in addition to the Mind the Mum project, we have secured one more project, ALTHEA, coordinated by the CUT Department of Nursing (Dr. Angelos Kassianos) and funded by the Cyprus Research and Innovation Promotion Foundation (IDEP). Our team has been working hard to secure more projects in an increasingly competitive environment. However, although we expect to continue to secure income primarily through project proposals to European and national funding programs, we have also identified a great need for funding diversification, such as to secure a measurable source of income from other sources. We are looking into the possibility of working with private donors- through CSR programs, as well as into opportunities for unrestricted and operational funding.

Private donations are welcome through our [website](#) and via Bank Deposit at our account in Bank of Cyprus (IBAN CY02002001950000357026079034).



ACHIEVEMENTS & IMPACT

In 2024, at Birth Forward, we proudly:

- **Represented the voice of women and parents as service users** in National Committees, such as the Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the National Strategy on Natural Birth and Reducing Prematurity and the contextualization of NICE protocols on C-sections in Cyprus (as CyFPA members). Our representatives continued to voice the importance of informed choice, transparency of information and participation in decision making and rights including presence of birth partner.
- **Introduced rights-based principles and concepts into the national discourse**, including “Respectful Maternity Care” (RMC) and “Obstetric Violence”, especially through our work on the Respect project. We brought different actors into conversation and attracted public attention during Stakeholder Meetings throughout the year. This led up to the drafting of a National Strategy on Respectful Maternity Care and RMC Guide for Practitioners, both led by Cyprus University of Technology - Respect Scientific Coordinator Dr. Nicos Middleton). We also talked about rights, RMC and shared decision making during our media and digital-social media presence (podcasts, lives, our own social media).
- **Secured additional funding**, mainly through projects (The EU4Health funded Mind the Mum project and RIPP funded ALTHEA project), to sustain our operational team and continue our work into the next few years on topics relevant to our mission (maternal mental health and disease prevention through social connections respectively). Building on our strengthened and expanded partnerships nationally and around Europe, we also participated as partners in a growing number of project funding applications (over 10 project proposals in 2024 alone).

ACHIEVEMENTS & IMPACT

In 2024, at Birth Forward, we also proudly:

-  **Expanded and strengthened our networks nationally and beyond.** In 2024 we joined as members in the Pancyprrian Volunteerism Coordinating Council (PVCC), the Cyprus Women's Lobby and applied for membership in the National Committee of the National Machinery for Women's Rights. We continued our close collaboration with CyFPA as connected members and the Anna Lindh and were present in key events, including the Presidential Palace's Patients' Rights forum and the PVCC Annual Conference. We also stayed close to global networks and developments through our participation in international forums such as the International Roundtable of Human Rights in Childbirth.
-  **Continued supporting communities of mothers and new parents,** through our volunteer's work in social media groups, responding to individual messages and calls to discuss questions, concerns and experiences around pregnancy childbirth and early parenthood (for 2024, we estimated over 60 women received one to one support an over 150 through our work in groups).
-  **Progressed our internal operations toward more transparency and standardization,** by renewing our Strategic Plan 2024-2027, developing a Code of Ethics and Conduct procedure, addressing required constitutional updates, drafting procedures and securing productivity tools complementary or at discounted rates for Non Profits (Google Workspace, monday.com, VISME etc).
-  Taken together, these steps underscore a year of strategic progress — one defined by evidence-based advocacy, partnership-building, and a resolute pursuit of systemic improvements in maternity care while striving for operational excellence.





LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

As we move into 2025, Birth Forward is ready to harness the momentum of the past year and channel it into bold, transformative action. The anticipated implementation of the National Strategy on Natural Birth & Reducing Prematurity will be a vital milestone. Throughout this process, we will advocate for its full and effective rollout, monitor its progress, and empower healthcare professionals, parents, and communities to embrace evidence-based, respectful care as a shared standard.

Beyond policy, we will continue to grow our impact through education, sharing knowledge and practical tools to support informed choices for women and families. Strengthening existing relationships and forging new partnerships — including deepened engagement with the Anna Lindh Foundation and the European Women's Lobby — will help us advocate for systemic reform across borders.

On the national stage, we look forward to joining the National Mechanism for Women's Rights, which will offer a vital platform to advance gender equality and amplify the voices of those most affected by maternity care.

With a strong focus on advocacy, empowerment, and education, 2025 will be a year of action and innovation — one that enables us to drive meaningful change, foster lasting connections, and inspire collective progress. Our energy is high, our commitment unwavering, and together we will create a more inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for women, their families, and healthcare professionals alike.









REMEMBERING OUR FOUNDER

Dr. Eline Pedersen (21.04.1975-27.11.2023).

Dr. Eline Pedersen was A Doctor of Chiropractic, a Wife, and a Mother. As a chiropractor specializing in pregnancy and newborns, she noticed a huge need for information, empowerment and support among mothers, parents and new families in Cyprus, especially for natural birth and for building support communities.

Eline was determined to lead change and build communities that support parents and dedicated to building a community of women and parents who support each other. So she garnered health professionals, academics, activists and parents from the grassroots and under her leadership our Organization, Birth Forward, the sole NGO working islandwide to support parents make autonomous choices about their own and their families welfare throughout the full cycle of creating a family.

Eline has been an influencer, a mentor, and a leader, locally and globally. Eline has encouraged and inspired mothers to live fully, choose their path, hold space for each other, claim their health and birth rights, and bring healthy, responsible humans into the world. She served as Birth Forward President for six years, and in 2022, she became the Honourary President for Life. Under her leadership, this community grew strong enough to carry on her vision.

Our beloved founder left us early. But we continue our work and evolve. In every milestone, every achievement and every time we remember that Birth Forward owes its existence to Eline Pedersen.

Eline has always been a person who celebrates life; she was a visionary and a community leader, and this is how we will continue to remember her. We will continue to hold space and be here for each other.





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