



EDITORIAL

## FIRE

Humans discovered their ability to control fire over a million years ago. Since then fire has been central to human progress; from extracting metals and minerals from their ores, to forging tools and weapons, to energy generation and enabling the internal combustion engine. Our focus pays homage to this stupendous discovery with an inferno of research.

A common theme shining throughout this edition is harnessing the power of the sun. Prof. Ing Luciano Mulè Stagno transformed a derelict building in Marsaxlokk into the cutting-edge Solar Research Lab at the heart of the Institute for Sustainable Energy (University of Malta, [UM]; pg. 4 & 20). Their main aim is to advance solar energy panel technologies and enhance their efficiency.

Another team on campus has gone one step further. Instead of trying to capture the sun's energy, they are working to ignite a miniature sun right here on Earth. Dr Ing. Nicholas Sammut and his colleagues are part of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), trying to harness nuclear fusion and create a reactor that could power whole countries with practically no pollution (pg. 28).

The journey towards sustainability comes with challenges. The legal issues involved in writing legislation that addresses climate change are vast (pg. 32). Encouraging renewable energy encounters another major problem—how does one store excess energy on a sunny or windy day? The FLASC project has devised a clever way to do so (pg. 48).

As well as fire, the issue covers health research on dementia (pg. 62), ALS (a life-threatening neuromuscular disorder; pg. 44), and how patients can co-produce knowledge with researchers through dynamic consent (pg. 13). Artists are also helping patients cope with their ailments in different ways (pg. 64), while students are building a Maltese Thesaurus (pg. 15), and understanding the universe (pg. 14)—this research is truly on fire.

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