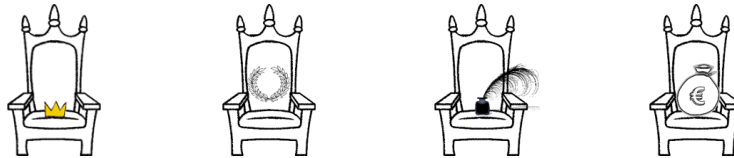


## 2026-2029

### ESSTS Board Elections | Candidate Information



Candidates are listed in alphabetical order by surname within each position category. All candidate statements and information are presented verbatim as submitted, preserving the original content and formatting provided by each applicant.

The following table provides an overview of all candidates standing for election to the 2026 ESSTS Board:

Candidate	Institution	Country	Candidacy	Previous Board Service
<b>Elia Abi-Jaoude</b>	Hospital for Sick Children / University of Toronto	Canada	Vice-Chair Secretary Treasurer	No
<b>Laavanya Damodaran</b>	Birmingham Women's & Children's NHS Foundation Trust	UK	Secretary Treasurer	No
<b>Osman Malik</b>	Evelina London, St Thomas Hospital	UK	Vice-Chair	No
<b>Natalia Szejko</b>	Institute of Mother and Child, Warsaw Institute of Mother and Child, Hannover Medical School	Poland, Germany	Chair Vice-Chair	2020-2023 Secretary 2023-2026 Treasurer (current term)

For questions about candidate information, please contact [elections@essts.org](mailto:elections@essts.org)





## Chair

**Natalia Szejko**

**Professional Title/Role:** MD, PhD, ScD

**Institution/Organisation:** Institute of Mother and Child, Hannover Medical School

**Department/Unit:** Department of Health Sociology, Education and Medical Communication Institute of Mother and Child, Warsaw, Poland

**Country:** Poland, Germany

### Statement of Interest and Vision

I have dedicated 12 years to clinical and research work focused on Tourette syndrome which gradually became my passion and main interest. As a neurologist with strong interest in psychiatry and neuropsychiatry across the lifespan TS seemed always a perfect choice and the most interesting disorder that ever existed. When I discovered ESSTS in 2014 thanks to my mentor, neurologist, Prof. Piotr Janik with whom we came together for the congress in Paris, I immediately felt at home and welcomed. No other society that I have experience with and involvement gave me that and I have cooperated and been involved with the European Academy of Neurology, European Pediatric Neurology Society, Movement Disorders Society, International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions and Functional Neurological Disorders Society. I am extremely grateful to my long-standing mentor and role model and the best leader that I really admire who introduced me further to TS and ESSTS by proposing me as the candidate for the Board, Prof. Kirsten Müller-Vahl as well my other mentors that I have met along the journey, most of them were also involved in the ESSTS Board, prof. Andreas Hartmann, prof. Nanette Mol Debes, dr Tammy Hedderly, Prof. Davide Martino and Prof. Tamara Pringsheim. The wonderful adventure with ESSTS would have not been possible at all without Anna Kanta an amazing human being and soul of ESSTS whose professionalism and dedication and welcoming spirit could not be overrated. Taken together, I feel that I would not have been the same person without ESSTS as it shaped me professionally and personally giving me



immense opportunities to meet professionals across the globe, get involved and have a real, shaping impact on lives of patients, organization of courses, congresses, webinars and other activities. It showed me what is the spirit of passion and compassion and that is truly universal and is worth much more than money or titles. I had an opportunity to shape my own "baby" - the webinars which also became my personal project and the work of passion. I was able to reach out and help patients around the globe, like recently, from Bulgaria. With all of this and my complete commitment to ESSTS as well TS which remain my main passion across the years until now, I feel confident that I can lead the Society towards next stages of development. First of all, I would like to continue our mission of global development and expand ESSTS beyond Europe, including Eastern Europe, Low- and Middle-Income Countries as well as Asia which aligns with ESSTS openness to global members and addresses inequality in care access and training. To start this journey, I am already planning to organize a webinar with experts from Asia, given that I will be able to meet them during the upcoming congress of the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions where I am one of the presenters. Leveraging this opportunity, I am also planning to invited TS experts from Asia to be one of the speakers in the upcoming ESSTS congresses (Prof. Yukiko Kano from Japan and Prof. Yi Zheng from China). Given limited access to training, including behavioral therapy and given that ESSTS has limited financial resources, I am also planning to organize and promote an online learning platform with organized pathway of training for TS specialist, including a module on behavioral therapy. I would be very happy if this could be translated into other languages so that it can become a standard of training and leverage the gap in access to training. At the end the users can received an ESSTS specific certification which can become a new standard of training in the world. I would also like to propose and develop more structured working groups within ESSTS, for example research group, clinical group, education group, patients group and young investigators group. I think an open call to form these groups with clear leaders and timelines for reports to the Board will enable to be more inclusive and will be a platform for networking so that more ESSTS members can shape the society. We can also start collecting more detailed information about the members and create a map of competences so that the members can have access to Information about other members with similar interests or when they search for partners for a project or support with a difficult case. As I am particularly interested in research myself, one of ideas could be to create a pan-European registry on tics with structured set of datapoints. For young members, I was considering to create a group called Young ESSTS which can, among, others benefit from the Mentorship Program -



given my experience in the mentorship programs by the Movement Disorders Society, European Academy of Neurology and International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions. In this structured online program that would finalize with the in person networking meeting during ESSTS Congress, participants will be able to benefit from the junior–senior mentorship, research incubators and grant-writing workshops. We could also develop a Clinical Trials Acceleration Platform where recommended trials will be highlighted with clinical site map. This will help ESSTS to increase funding and visibility and will be very beneficial for the patients given translation from research to treatment.

### Experience with Tourette Syndrome

I am a neurologist with extensive clinical and research experience in tic disorders, comorbidities, and neuropsychiatry. I graduated from the Medical University of Warsaw (WUM), where I also completed my internship and neurology residency training at the Department of Neurology. In 2020, I obtained my PhD at WUM with a dissertation focused on the clinical characteristics of tics and comorbid disorders in Gilles de la Tourette syndrome (GTS). I am currently working as a researcher at the Institute of Mother and Child in Warsaw and work as a consulting neurologist at Babiński Hospital in Łódź.

During my residency, I completed multiple international fellowships, including: Erasmus fellowship under Prof. Kirsten Müller-Vahl (Hannover Medical School, Germany), Joint Fellowship of the Movement Disorders Society and European Huntington Disease Network (Madrid, Spain), EAN Clinical Fellowship (Innsbruck, Austria), and a Kościuszko Foundation Research Fellowship at Yale University (USA). From January 2020 to March 2021, I completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Yale University under Prof. Guido Falcone, focusing on big data, genomics, and data science in neurology. After completing my neurology training, I undertook a two-year clinical and research fellowship in tic disorders and movement disorders at the University of Calgary (Canada) under Prof. Tamara Pringsheim and Prof. Davide Martino, funded by the American Brain Foundation, American Academy of Neurology, and Tourette Association of America. This work resulted in multiple publications including studies on premonitory urges, functional tics, and cut-off values for psychiatric assessment tools in adults with GTS. My main project focused on sex differences in structural and functional MRI in GTS is currently publication ready.



Since 2017, I have collaborated closely with Prof. Kirsten Müller-Vahl, resulting in numerous projects and publications. I co-authored all sections of the latest European guidelines for tic disorders, serving as first author on two sections (diagnosis/assessment and deep brain stimulation). I am also the senior author of the Polish guidelines for treatment of tics. My research with Prof. Müller-Vahl includes studies on self-injurious behaviors, body-focused repetitive behaviors, functional tics, epidemiology, prognosis, DBS, cannabinoid treatments, and neurobiological mechanisms. Current projects include research on neurodiversity in tic disorders, social media influences, long-term outcomes, loneliness, and AI-based tic assessment. Altogether, my work has led to over 120 publications and book chapters as well as international collaborations, including contributions to textbooks, guideline development, and conference sessions. Majority of them are dedicated to tic disorders.

Apart from ESSTS, I am actively involved in multiple other international organizations where I also work on research and educational activities related to tics. As the Chair of News Subcommittee of TTAG, I am leading the preparation of lay summaries of the articles to make it more accessible for patients. In the European Academy of Neurology I serve as E-learning Liaison of the Scientific Panel on Child Neurology, European Academy of Neurology where we currently develop fundamentals course in child neurology with strong elements in neurodevelopment, including tics. I also serve as Member of the Management Group of the Child Neurology Panel of the EAN where I also am Guidelines Representative. In EAN, I am also Member of the Management Group of the Scientific Panel on Functional Neurological Disorders where we developed sessions for EAN Congress and series of podcasts related to FND, including functional tic-like behaviors. In the Functional Neurological Disorders Society (FNDS), I serve as Co-Chair of the Sex and Gender Special Interest Group as well the Chair of the Treatment Group of the Pediatric Special Interesting Group where we work on a number of projects related to social media and FTLB as well as FTLB in children and gender diverse individuals. In the Movement Disorders Society, I am the member of the Steering Committee of the Functional Movement Disorders Group, the Member of the Steering Committee of the Early Parkinson's Disease Group of the Movement Disorders' Society. I am also the Host of ESSTS webinars since 2020. I have presented 89 posters, oral presentations and lectures the majority dedicated to tics, mainly in international congresses, including ESSTS, MDS, EAN and European Psychiatric Association.



### Institutional Support/Collaborative Resources

I have full support of my mentor Prof. Kirsten Mueller Vahl from the Hannover Medical School, Germany as well as the Director of the Institute of Mother and Child in Warsaw.

### Previous ESSTS Involvement

Organization of ESSTS congresses since 2020, organization and preparation of TS School since 2020. Host of webinars of the European Society for the Study of Tourette Syndrome since 2020, overall, 30 episodes that could be consulted here: <https://www.essts.org/news-categories/webinars>. I have also worked on development of new ESSTS Guidelines, in two of them I am the leading author.

### Previous Board Service

- Treasurer 2023-2026
  - Secretary 2020-2023
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## Vice Chair (3 candidates)

### I. Elia Abi-Jaoude

**Professional Title/Role:** Psychiatrist

**Institution/Organisation:** Hospital for Sick Children / University of Toronto

**Department/Unit:** Psychiatry

**Country:** Canada

### Statement of Interest and Vision

It is my privilege to apply for a position for with the ESSTS Board of Directors. I'm an academic psychiatrist based at the University of Toronto, Canada. I lead the Tics and Tourette Clinic at The Hospital for Sick Children, where I'm also medical director of the outpatient program in the Department of Psychiatry.

While I've known about ESSTS for many years, I first attended the annual conference in 2022 - and I was hooked. Everytime I go, I feel like a kid in a candy shop - between the fascinating presentations and posters, highly stimulating discussions, both formal and informal, and most especially the people and relationships developed, I was gripped. Despite limited resources, ESSTS has been playing a premier role in the dissemination of clinical and scientific knowledge across the TS community and beyond. Further, in collaboration with TTAG, there has been increasingly meaningful participation and integration of those with lived experience in ESSTS activities.

My interest in joining the board stems from wanting to contribute my part to the organization, having been a member and attended the conferences since several years now. While I'm confident that I can make meaningful contributions, if I'm honest, when I look around me, I see many highly capable members who would make at least as valuable contributions. Considering what I could bring more specifically, I would say that an area of particular strength of mine is that of relationships - strengthening relations within organizations, and building them across groups. On a related note, I also bring the North American perspective.



ESSTS has been increasingly open to those outside of Europe, and I believe there is opportunity for more people from North America to be involved. It has been wonderful to experience the hidden gems of Europe at the ESSTS conferences, and perhaps at some point we could have a conference in Canada!

In terms of Board positions to be considered for, probably the best fit for me at this time would be that of Secretary. Having said that, I am flexible and would also be open to Treasurer, or possibly Vice Chair, depending on the need.

Thank you for considering my candidacy.

### Experience with Tourette Syndrome

I am a clinician, educator, and researcher with a specific focus in Tourette syndrome. I have been in clinical practice since 2009. I lead the Tics and Tourette Clinic at The Hospital for Sick Children, and I also work at the adult Tourette Syndrome Neurodevelopmental Clinic at the Toronto Western Hospital. As well, I have Tourette syndrome myself, as do both my daughters and multiple other members in my family.

### Institutional Support/Collaborative Resources

I have 50% protected time at my institution for academic activities, including research, teaching, and administrative.

### Potential Conflicts of Interest

I have no financial conflicts of interest. I am a member of the board of Tourette Canada, and I am also on the research committee at TTAG.

### Previous Board Service

No



## II. Osman Malik

**Professional Title/Role:** Consultant Child and Adolescent Neuropsychiatrist

**Institution/Organisation:** Evelina London, St Thomas Hospital / South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

**Department/Unit:** Children's Neuroscience

**Country:** United Kingdom

### Statement of Interest and Vision

My introduction to Tourette syndrome came during my early years as a trainee doctor, and what began as a clinical encounter quickly deepened into a lasting professional passion and special interest, that has shaped the trajectory of my career ever since.

When the opportunity arose to join the TANDEM service, the specialist Tourette clinic at St Thomas' Hospital in London, I embraced it wholeheartedly. More than ten years on, it remains the foundation of my clinical work and the source of some of my most meaningful professional experiences. In these last 10 years I have also been part of ESSTS, attending the meetings every year, and fostering relationships with colleagues, other members of ESSTS across Europe and beyond which I genuinely value.

Advocacy for people with Tourette syndrome, support for patients and families, and a commitment to research and education have been a central part of my career. I teach regularly at postgraduate level, helping to equip the next generation of clinicians with the understanding of tics, Tourette syndrome, and associated conditions.

On the research side, I have contributed to several significant projects, including EMTICS, TicGen and SATURN (a study comparing Guanfacine and Methylphenidate in children with both ADHD and TS). Alongside my colleagues in the TANDEM team, I have also been involved in developing accessible, practical guidance for parents and teachers for managing tics and related differential.

Standing for Vice Chair feels like a natural extension of this commitment. The goals of ESSTS – advancing understanding of the causes and mechanisms of TS, establishing its true prevalence and impact, fostering international research



collaboration, identifying effective treatments, and championing best practice – are goals I have worked toward throughout my career, and ones I am eager to pursue with greater purpose and reach.

I am collaborative person by nature, can carefully listen to those around me and engage in different perspectives. This allows me to engage with people from different disciplines, backgrounds and views, helping bring people together from across disciplines and borders. I would bring those qualities, alongside my clinical experience and research background, to the Vice Chair role – and would consider it a privilege to serve ESSTS and its members in this capacity.

### Experience with Tourette Syndrome

I have been working as a consultant child and adolescent neuropsychiatrist in a specialist tertiary Tics and Tourette syndrome clinic in London for over 10 years. I run two clinics per week assessing and managing children and young people with tics and also with other related/ differential movements. I also assess and manage the common co-morbidities of Tics/ TS. I am actively participating in teaching on tics to trainee doctors, post graduate students and to other disciplines. I am also actively engaged in research and publications on the topic of Tourette syndrome (e.g. TicGen) and SATURN (Stimulant Medication for ADHD and Tics - Understanding Response versus Non-stimulants (SATURN): a randomised trial of the clinical and cost-effectiveness of methylphenidate versus guanfacine for ADHD in children and young people with a co-existing tic disorder funded by NIHR.

### Institutional Support/Collaborative Resources

I am actively supported by the team lead Dr Tammy Hedderly and the head of Neuroscience dept at my hospital, Dr Michael Abosud to apply for this position. I am also supported by my employer - South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation trust to enable me to fulfill board responsibilities.

### Previous Board Service

No

### III. Natalia Szejko

*(See full details under Chair section above)*





## Secretary (2 candidates)

### I. Elia Abi-Jaoude

*(See full details under Vice Chair section above)*

### II. Laavanya Damodaran

**Professional Title/Role:** Consultant Paediatric Liaison Neuropsychiatrist

**Institution/Organisation:** Birmingham Women's & Children's NHS Foundation Trust

**Department/Unit:** Birmingham Children's Hospital

**Country:** United Kingdom

#### Statement of Interest and Vision

Having attended the ESSTS Congress regularly since 2023 and having been a member of ESSTS for the past year, I have greatly appreciated the organisation's impressive trajectory of success since its inception. As the only organisation of its kind globally, ESSTS continues to advance knowledge and practice in meaningful ways. I have closely followed the invaluable work carried out by ESSTS and its members, whose cutting-edge research across various areas consistently enhances our understanding and standards of care for individuals with Tic Disorders and their co-existing conditions. Each year, the spirit of collaboration and co-production is palpable, and it is truly inspiring to see these collective efforts showcased during the annual congress.

I have also had the pleasure of contributing in a small way by securing a bronze-level sponsorship for the 2025 ESSTS Congress and assisting with the invitation and organisation of a speaker from India for the TTAG session.

I am aware of the recent financial challenges facing the organisation, an unsurprising reality given the global economic slowdown and rising inflation,



which underscores the significance of the treasurer's role in the current climate. Although I have not previously held a formal financial position, my work within a UK National Health Organisation and the Royal College of Psychiatrists (Child and Adolescent Faculty) has given me insight into the core functions and responsibilities of finance departments.

I look forward to gaining further understanding from the current ESSTS treasurer regarding any existing challenges and to working collaboratively and creatively with the board to strengthen this crucial area of the organisation. I am committed to contributing to its continued development in the upcoming term.

### Experience with Tourette Syndrome

My initial exposure to Tic Disorders in the United Kingdom was during my Child and Adolescent Psychiatry specialty training within secondary mental health services. In this setting, I was responsible for the assessment and treatment of children presenting with Tic Disorders, an experience that significantly deepened my interest in the field. A formative moment during this period was attending a lecture by Professor Mary Robertson in the Midlands in 2014. Her presentation was both intellectually stimulating and influential, prompting further reflection on the historical and clinical nuances of Tourette Syndrome. I found it so engaging that, later that evening, I shared Mozart's *Leck mich im Arsch* on social media to spark discussion about whether he may have had Tourette Syndrome or was simply making a provocative artistic statement.

In the same year, I organised the Neuropsychiatry teaching programme for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry trainees across the West Midlands, with sessions delivered in 2015. Professor Andrea Cavanna was among the invited speakers, and his distinguished academic contributions to the field of Tic Disorders constituted the highlight of the programme. This exposure to leading experts further reinforced my aspiration to advance my knowledge and clinical practice.

Since 2016, I have served as a Neuropsychiatrist at a tertiary children's hospital in the West Midlands, working collaboratively with Paediatric Neurology colleagues in the assessment and management of children with Tic Disorders and associated comorbidities. My specialist training, coupled with a sustained commitment to engaging with emerging evidence, has contributed to a highly rewarding and clinically enriching practice.



### Institutional Support/Collaborative Resources

Attendance at the ESSTS Congress since 2023 has had a substantial impact on my clinical approach, academic development, and broader professional outlook. These experiences have strengthened my dedication to the field and have motivated me to contribute actively to ESSTS. I am committed to bringing my clinical expertise, academic interest, and collaborative ethos to the society, and I hope to support its mission to advance the understanding and treatment of Tic Disorders across the globe.

### Previous ESSTS Involvement

As detailed in the statement of interest

### Previous Board Service

No

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### Treasurer (2 candidates)

I. Elia Abi-Jaoude

*(See full details under Vice Chair section above)*

II. Laavanya Damodaran

*(See full details under Secretary section above)*

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