



ANNUAL REPORT

2020



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There were 19,705 persons with a disability registered with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with a Disability (CRPD) at the end of December 2020.

Of these, 15,268 had physical disabilities while 3,438 had an intellectual impairment, 2,506 persons had a psychological disability, 1,569 had a hearing impairment and 1,571 had an impairment related to sight.*

**Totals do not match because persons can have more than one impairment.*

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This report as well as an easy-to-read summary are available from CRPD's offices and website.

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Our Mission

The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) is committed to rendering Maltese society an inclusive one, in a way that persons with disability reach their full potential in all aspects of life, enjoying a high quality of life thanks to equal opportunities.

In fulfilling this mission, CRPD works in order to eliminate any form of direct or indirect social discrimination against persons with disability and their families, while providing them with the necessary assistance and support.

Commissioner's Foreword



Mr Oliver Scicluna
Commissioner (Outgoing)



Ms Samantha Pace Gasan
Commissioner

2020 was the year of COVID-19, when persons with disability were affected not just by the pandemic itself but more so by the social and economic impact deriving from restrictive measures put in place to control its spread.

While initially the Commission had to put aside its planned course for 2020 - including conferences, campaigns and its work calendar - it soon took on a dynamic role as a champion for the rights of persons with a disability.

Through the Commission's initiative, a disability taskforce was set up in April to work on monitoring and challenging policies and strategies in place that impact persons with disability and their families. CRPD also launched an awareness campaign, shining a light on the lives of persons with disabilities during the pandemic. A research study was also commissioned through the Faculty for Social Wellbeing to assess the effects of

the pandemic on the lives of persons with disability and their families.

The Commission's investigations, too, responded to the new circumstances, taking on complaints of a different nature due to the pandemic. Services were shifted online and measures were taken to ensure their smooth running, despite the new challenges.

It was a challenging year, no doubt, but also an invigorating one, when the Commission's role of safeguarding the rights of persons with disability was crucial, perhaps more than ever before. At a time of unprecedented crisis, the team came together to ensure that persons with disability were included in every decision and at every turn, as well as identifying new opportunities for future collaboration; all with the aim of making a positive difference in the daily lives of persons with disability and their families.

Directors' Introduction



Ms Rhoda Garland
Executive Director

It would indeed be an understatement to say that Covid-19 has had a dramatic impact on the lives of disabled people in Malta and Gozo, as well as on the work of CRPD during 2020.

The previous year I had spent a lot of time speaking in conferences abroad about the experience of disabled people in Malta. In 2020 this work was reduced to one trip to Morocco to continue the work performed in conjunction with the Office for Disability Issues, in reviewing and discussing the assessment of disabled people as part of the EU-Arab work.

Covid-19 took hold in Malta shortly after my return from Morocco and resulted in the CRPD offices being closed completely, with all the employees being asked to work from home. In order to ensure that the EU Disability Card and blue badge operations continued, a process was put in place whereby mail was collected from our office on alternate days which I reviewed, before it was passed on to employees to work on.

At this point, I should thank our two messengers Mr Andrea Gergis and Mr Danny Farrugia for their sterling efforts in driving around Malta dropping off and picking up work from our employees, to ensure that our processes continued.

The blue badge procedure was amended to provide all applicants with a temporary blue badge valid for a year so that they would not need to attend assessment appointments. Later in the year, when we re-opened our offices so that a limited number of employees could return to work on a roster, we began reviewing these temporary blue badges.

Due to very stringent controls within our office, there has been minimal impact on our service provision due to Covid-19, with the employees working tirelessly to ensure that our clients have all of their queries answered in a timely manner and that our regular work is done with as little disruption as possible.

I would like to thank all of them for their efforts during what has been a very challenging year.



Dr Bernard A. Busuttill
*Director, Investigations,
Compliance & Enforcement*

I am afraid that I would be stating the obvious by underlining the singular degree of disruption which the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to our lives. Yet one cannot stress enough the way in which this pandemic has adversely affected the lives of persons with disabilities, their families, associates and service providers.

The uncertainty, pain and anguish born out of the pandemic were reflected in the work of the Investigations Unit during 2020. While the number of cases of alleged discrimination on the basis of disability fell dramatically when compared to 2019, the pattern of the cases filed changed somewhat.

A pattern arose whereby the number of cases filed in relation to accessibility and education fell steeply, while cases in relation to employment increased at an equally sharp rate. The reason for such fluctuations can easily be traced to the COVID-19 pandemic, where staying at home has become the order of the day, thus less people were reporting lack of accessibility or problems at school.

In the latter case, the problems were created specifically due to their closure and lack of services provided for disabled students. With regards to employment, more people feared being discriminated against due to Covid-related measures.

The pandemic has also tested CRPD quite heavily. Yet its staff rose to the occasion. The decision to transfer most paper-based systems to cloud-based ones proved to be most inspired, given that we were able to transition to working from home almost seamlessly. Thus it is most fitting to thank everyone at CRPD for showing their commitment towards protecting the rights of persons with disability.

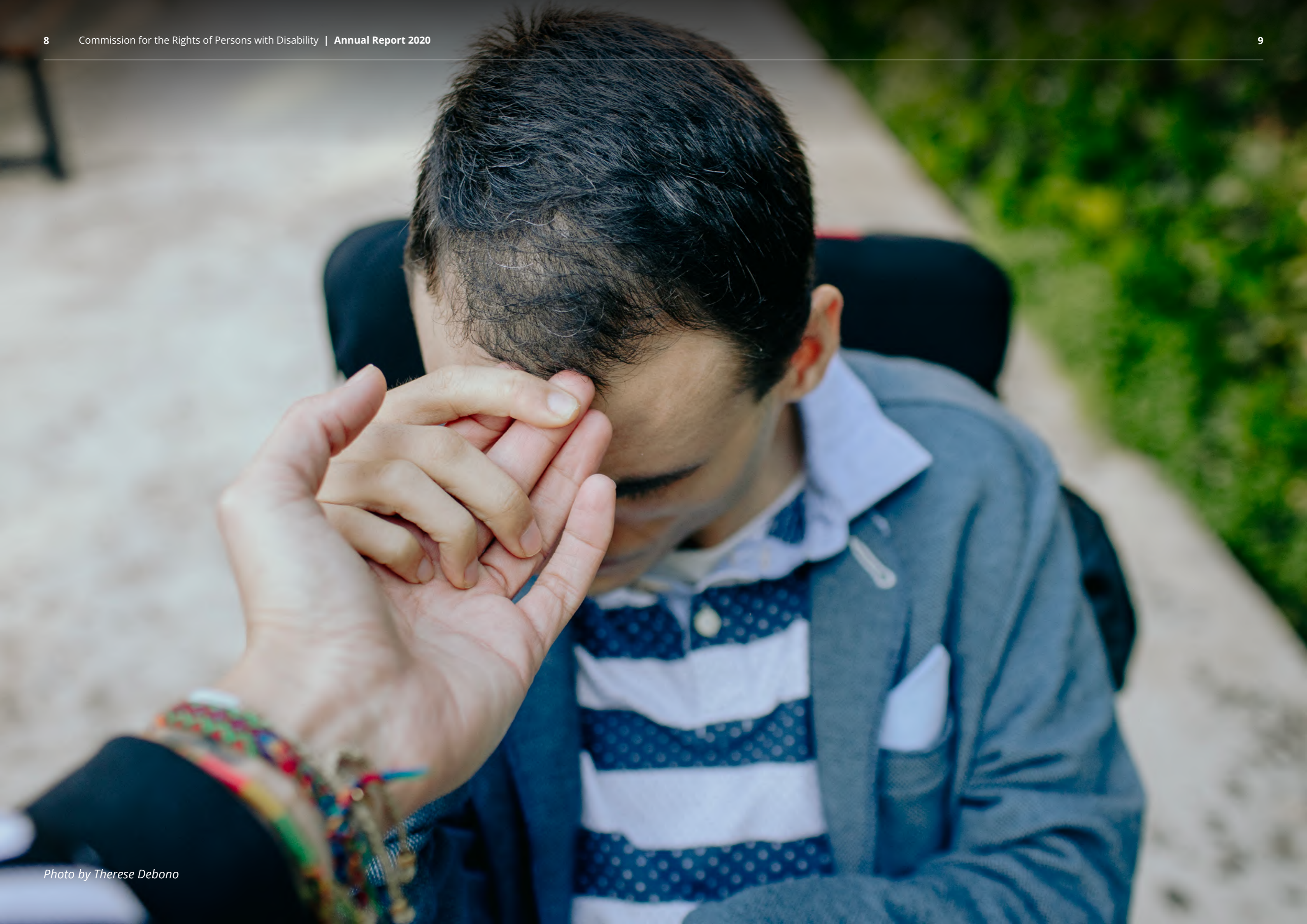


Photo by Therese Debono

Council Members 2020

Mr Oliver Scicluna
Commissioner

Ms Mary Rose Attard
Person with Disability

Ms Lorna Callus
Special Olympics Malta

Ms Amy Camilleri Zahra
Opposition Representative

Mr Matthew Chetcuti
Government Representative

Ms Lourdes Farrugia
Person with Disability

Dr Maria Victoria Gauci
University of Malta

Ms Carmen Grech
Gozo Representative

Ms Marchita Mangiafico
Parent of Person with Disability

Attendees

Ms Rhoda Garland
CRPD Executive Director

Fr Martin Micallef
Archdiocese of Malta

Ms Marthese Mugliette
*Malta Federation of Organisations
of Persons with Disability*

Ms Carmen Muscat
Person with Disability

Mr Loran Ripard Xuereb
Deaf People Association (Malta)

Ms Ruth Sciberras
Aġenzija Sapport

Ms Rita Vella
Person with Disability

Dr Bernard Busuttil
*CRPD Director, Investigations,
Compliance and Enforcement*

The Structure of CRPD

The members of the CRPD Council are appointed by the Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights (MSFC) following consultation with NGOs in the sector, for a period of two years.

CRPD Council Meetings were held in January, April, June, July and October 2020. Among the topics discussed, were the following:

- The Early Intervention research project;
- Working with ITS as part of CRPD's 16+ transition strategy;
- The Covid-19 situation vis-à-vis the disability sector;
- The Guardianship board nominations selection process;
- The disability taskforce;
- CRPD accounts and budget;
- The disability and employment research project;
- Issues relating to education;
- Legislation relating to disability;
- An amendment re personalized reserved parking legal notice;
- The need for a carers' allowance;
- A research study about the COVID-19 impact on persons with disability.

CRPD in 2020

January

The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) launches 'Different is Normal', a photographic campaign which aimed to increase the visibility of persons with a disability by portraying them doing what they most enjoy in their everyday lives. Photos were taken by Darrin Zammit Lupi.

CRPD executive director Rhoda Garland addresses a UN Development Conference on ICF Changeover in Casablanca, Morocco.

April

The COVID-19 Disability Task Force was set up in April 2020 and has since continuously worked on monitoring and challenging policies and strategies in place that impact persons with disability and their families.

July

The Commission published its Equal Opportunities (EOA) report, with info and statistics on all the complaints filed at CRPD for investigation on the basis of disability.

CRPD executive director Rhoda Garland addresses the Equinet Platform on Social Rights, Equality and Human Rights-Based Approach to Recovery in Response to COVID-19.

November

Following a cabinet reshuffle, the disability sector gets its own dedicated ministry for the first time, the Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing.

March

On 7 March 2020 Malta registered its first COVID case. Shortly after, CRPD closed its doors to the public and moved its processes online.

Also in March, the Commission released the recording of a lecture to provide Disability Equality Training to staff working at Mater Dei Hospital. This recorded lecture, which also features clips on the experiences of persons with different disabilities in hospital settings, now forms part of the training delivered to staff working at MDH as part of an EU-funded Project.

May

CRPD launched an awareness campaign on persons with a disability during the COVID-19 pandemic. This featured video clips with persons with a disability relating their lives during the pandemic and an official video clip urging policymakers to include persons with disability in all decisions.

Auditions were held for the second Fi Kliemna video clip awareness campaign.

October

CRPD issues a press statement pointing out that COVID-19 school measures cannot be at the expense of students with a disability.

It also published a research study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and persons with disability, which was carried out by the Faculty of Social Wellbeing within the University of Malta in collaboration with the Commission.

Also in collaboration with the Faculty, the Commission organized 'Intersecting Identities', a webinar on intersectionality and persons with disability, focusing on how persons with disability have complex identities composed of nuances, interests and aspirations and all those aspects that make us human beings.

December

The annual CRPD conference was held on 3 December to mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Marked by a collaboration between the Commission, the Department of Disability Studies at the University of Malta and Opening Doors Malta, the webinar was entitled The Friendships of Young People with Disabilities.

CRPD launched its new website, reflecting a dynamic disability sector and with a simple layout and large images, designed with the various requirements of our users in mind. Its stylish modern design, including real photography of persons with a disability in Malta and Gozo, also provides a new image for the disability sector in Malta and Gozo.



Photo by Therese Debono

The Covid-19 Pandemic & Persons with Disability

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unparalleled challenges worldwide and decimated numerous opportunities, plans and strategies already in place. Nevertheless, these challenges have not been evenly distributed. 'In particular, minorities and indigenous peoples have not only borne the brunt of the disease itself – suffering disproportionate infection and death rates – but also the effects of restrictions to control the virus.' (Avery, 2020, para. 1).

In light of the above, the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) felt that it was crucial to set up a task force to monitor the impact of the pandemic on the disability sector. Consequently, the COVID-19 Disability Task Force was set up in April 2020 and has since continuously worked on monitoring and challenging policies and strategies in place that impact persons with disability and their families.

The Task Force is made up of different individuals, entities and organisations that are directly involved within the disability sector to ensure a holistic approach. Furthermore, in an effort to remain focused and productive, the Task Force is made up of different sub-committees according to the participating members' area of expertise.

The sub-committees include a Disability Task Force Main Group, Research Committee, Consultative Committee as well as a number of ad hoc members that are consulted as necessary.

In particular, minorities and indigenous peoples have not only borne the brunt of the disease itself – suffering disproportionate infection and death rates – but also the effects of restrictions to control the virus.

Throughout the past months a number of issues were tackled by the Task Force, mainly by liaising with the authorities responsible and challenging certain decisions that may impact the quality of life of persons with disability and their families. In addition, participating members provided feedback and issued position papers on a number of matters, ranging from the re-opening of schools and visitation rights for persons with disability living in institutions amongst others.



Photo by Therese Debono

The Task Force has also been in continuous communication with different authorities and service providers that cater for persons with disability, such as those providing therapy services, day centres and residential homes. Such communication included feedback, particularly on the reinstating of the said services after restrictions were in place.

The Task Force aims to continue monitoring the current COVID-19 situation to ensure that persons with disability are catered for in all areas of society. The ultimate aim is to ensure that persons with disability and their families are provided with guidance and support according to their individual needs through a universal approach.

In addition, a research study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and persons with disability was carried out by the Faculty of Social Wellbeing within the University of Malta in collaboration with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability. The research has presented both the findings and recommendations through a qualitative analysis.

Furthermore, another research study is currently underway by the Research Unit within the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability that will focus on the impact of the pandemic on inclusive education.

Moreover, other work has been carried out on a European level in liaison with the Disability High Level Group, Equinet and the Fundamental Rights Agency amongst others. This ensured that the Commission is continuously updated with best practices being implemented on an international level which could then be recommended within the local context.

The work carried out by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic has been aimed at safeguarding the fundamental rights of all persons with disability during both the crisis of the pandemic itself and the recovery period.



Photo by Therese Debono



Photo by Therese Debono

The Investigations Unit



Photo by Therese Debono

CRPD is responsible to ensure that the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act is observed in a reasonable manner.

To this end, CRPD receives complaints from persons with disability and their family members who feel that they are being discriminated against on the grounds of disability. Furthermore, CRPD is legally empowered to commence investigations into a case on its own initiative.

These investigations are carried out by the Investigations Unit, the unit specialised in receiving and investigating disability discrimination complaints.

Whenever it launches an investigation, this Unit tries to reach a speedy and amicable solution for the benefit of the person with disability as, in most cases, discrimination is the result of a lack of awareness of disabled people's rights. However, the Unit does not shy away from taking matters further should the need arise and, if need be, it also pursues the matter before the Courts of Justice.

During 2020, the composition of the team changed slightly after Ms Solange Bonello was promoted and moved to another section within CRPD. Ms Josette Azzopardi was recruited as an Assistant Manager. The position of Manager has not been filled as yet, and director Dr Bernard A. Busuttil takes an active role within the unit.

Statistics

During the period under review, the Unit received 475 requests for investigations. The highest number of these reports were lodged in connection with alleged misuse or abuse of a blue badge (230), while 88 reports were filed relating to matters regarding accessibility.

During the period under review, the Unit received 475 requests for investigations.

Complaints with regards to the education sector accounted for 39 of the total number of complaints, while the Unit received 39 complaints regarding the provision of goods, services and facilities.

There were also 42 complaints relating to employment and 24 relating to housing, eight complaints with regards to the provision of health services and five alleged breaches of rights of persons with disability.

Area	2019	2020	Change
Accessibility	174	88	-49%
Education	106	39	-63%
GS	58	39	-33%
Employment	24	42	75%
Housing	26	24	-8%
Health	6	8	33%
Rights	6	5	-17%
Blue Badge	229	230	0%
Total	629	475	-24%

Furthermore, the Investigations Unit was called upon to provide advice to the public on 84 instances and has asked technical officers from the Compliance Unit to carry out 117 site inspections in order to determine the level of accessibility in a site which being the subject of an investigation.

These figures shall be analysed in further detail in the annual report issued with respect to work carried out regarding the direct exercising of this Act. This also applies to the work carried out by the Test of Reasonableness Board, since a report on the latter is presented in the Equal Opportunities Act Annual Report.

Case Studies

Case 1

A man living in a household of seven persons, two of whom are his disabled children, was facing eviction following court action taken by the landlord. The man turned to CRPD for assistance after he was informed by the Housing Authority that he could only be assisted once a final judgment was meted out.

CRPD reached out to the Housing Authority and an agreement was reached whereby the family was allocated social housing on account of its particular needs.

Case 3

The parent of a disabled student complained that the lift at her son's school was no longer in function. This resulted in lack of access for her son and other students, especially since they could only access the toilet facilities via the lift.

CRPD reached out to the school, and the lift was fixed in a matter of days. CRPD maintained further communication with the school management, whereby it helped it with providing alternative temporary solutions when the lift is out of order.

Case 2

CRPD received a call from the mother of a young man with intellectual disability who had been in hospital for three months during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Whilst at Mater Dei Hospital, the mother was given special concession to visit her son at more frequent times, as he was susceptible to believing that his family had abandoned him and was feeling lost and confused.

On being transferred to Karin Grech Hospital, the mother asked CRPD to intervene in order to be granted similar visiting rights. CRPD contacted the hospital authorities who granted the woman more frequent visits on account of her son's mental wellbeing.

Case 4

The career progression of a man within a government entity was stuck due to the man's intellectual impairment. In expectation of an imminent promotion, the man was asked to produce a Level 4 certificate, even though he was entitled to automatic progression at the end of a five-year period employed with the entity, by virtue of an agreement signed between the entity and a trade union. In fact, none of his non-disabled peers were asked to produce such certificate.

Through CRPD's intervention with both the union and the government entity, the complainant was assured that he would be promoted automatically on completion of the mandatory five-year period.

Case 5

The mother of two disabled schoolchildren contacted CRPD claiming that the Learning Support Educators assigned on a full-time one-to-one basis with each of her sons were not supporting them whilst on an online learning regime due to the COVID-related school closures. CRPD reported the case to the National School Support Services which, in turn, liaised with the school's Inclusion Coordinator.

The school confirmed that both students, who are medically vulnerable, were asked to continue their schooling on a virtual basis and appropriate assistance by their LSEs was ensured.



Photo by Therese Debono

The Compliance Unit

The Compliance Unit is responsible for monitoring, auditing, giving advice and certifying applications that are made for the development of buildings which are open to the public. The Unit works with architects and developers to ensure that the plans which are eventually approved are accessible for disabled people.

Following the staff turnover that took place in 2019, the unit maintained its staff complement over the year under review.

The Unit works with architects and developers to ensure that the plans which are eventually approved are accessible for disabled people.

The unit's role is primarily that of receiving planning applications from the Planning Authority for its consideration on whether they are compliant with the Access for All Design Standards. Where the plans are not compliant, the technical experts in the Unit prepare an audit report which shows the amendments which need to be made in order for the development to be approved.

In the case of new buildings, the applicant is required to obtain a certificate from CRPD stating that the plans are compliant with the Access for All Design Guidelines, before the Planning Authority issues a compliance certificate to allow for water and electricity to be connected to the development.

The Unit offers a consultation service at the Planning Authority offices on Wednesdays, where a CRPD technical expert provided technical advice regarding physical accessibility to those who were in the process of submitting development applications.

In cases where the building cannot be rendered accessible to all or be fully accessible to all according to the Access for All Design Standards, the applicant may appear before the Test of Reasonableness Board (TORB). This is a board which considers exemptions on technical and financial reasons. This board meets once a month to hear cases.

Statistics

In 2020, the Unit received 4,030 applications. Of these 611 were approved, 2,819 were not approved and 600 fell under the parameters of MEPA Circular 2/14 and were therefore excluded from being vetted by CRPD.

Vetting of Planning Applications	Total	Percentage
Approved	611	15%
Not Approved	2,819	70%
MEPA Circular 2/14	600	15%
Total	4,030	

Unit officers also carried out 307 site inspections prior to recommending the issuance of a Compliance Certificate, without which one cannot apply for electricity and water utilities. Of these, 133 were found to be compliant, and 174 were not compliant.

Building Site Inspections	Total	Percentage
Compliant	133	43%
Not Compliant	174	57%
Total	307	

The Unit requests the issuance of bank guarantees in favour of CRPD whenever it receives an application for a compliance certificate to be issued according to Article 102(2) of the Development Planning Act, Chapter 552 of the Laws of Malta, and building falls short of respecting its planning permit. The following table shows figures relative to 2020.

Bank Guarantees	Number	Value
Issued	4	€48,446
Renewed	13	€56,764
Released	2	€4,300
Withdrawn	0	€0
Total	19	€109,510

In 2020, TORB heard 90 cases, out of which 35 were exempted wholly, four were exempted partially and 19 exempted against set conditions. A total of 21 requests for exemption were deemed not reasonable and were thus refused.

TORB Cases	Total	Percentage
Wholly exempted	35	39%
Partially exempted	4	4%
Exempted on condition	19	21%
Not exempted	21	23%
Withdrawn, drawings amended, insufficient information provided	11	12%
Total	90	

The Establishment of the Enforcement Unit

In 2018, CRPD commenced the process of setting up an Enforcement Unit, after it had observed that although it had the legal faculty of taking action against those who were creating discrimination on the basis of disability, it lacked the power to legally enforce its decisions in a direct and speedy manner. To this end, it started exploring ways in which it could equip itself in order to start enforcing its decisions. It was decided that an Enforcement Unit should be set up within CRPD.

In 2019, CRPD carried out an analysis of current legislation and identified the changes to such legislation that would need to be effected in order to allow for CRPD to enforce its decisions.

In the meantime, CRPD employed a person with prior enforcement

experience to be trained as an enforcement officer and contribute his experience to the setting up of the unit. Training included familiarisation with current disability-related legislation, sensitisation to the adverse effects of breaches of disability rights, and technical aspects of standards relating to the disability sector.

During 2020, preparations for the employment of a second enforcement officer were undertaken, with the person being identified; however, due to unforeseen circumstances his employment had to be put off for the subsequent year.

Once set up, a fully-fledged unit will be taking on three main tasks: providing an on-the-beat presence, providing for legal enforcement and helping in the curbing of abuse and misuse of the Blue Badge.

The Services Unit



Photo by Therese Debono

The Services Unit is the frontline of CRPD where most of our clients are able to access the information that they need relating to a whole host of areas within the disability sector. The services team are mainly responsible for registering clients to provide them with EU Disability Cards and blue parking badges as well as providing information about the One-Stop shop where clients can also apply for these cards. The services manager

is also responsible for maintaining the CRPD IT system.

When a client applies to be registered with CRPD they are given an EU Disability Card which provides them with access to other services offered by Government and also allows them to receive benefits offered to seven other EU Countries which also operate the EU Disability Card scheme.

Clients can also apply for a blue parking badge which allows them to park in communal blue parking bays in Malta and Gozo. Certain clients who are eligible for a blue badge may also be able to apply to Transport Malta for a personalized blue parking bay which will be close to their residence and designated for their personal use only.

When a blue badge expires, the Services team process the renewal applications and the replacement blue badge is given to the client when the expired blue badge is returned to CRPD. This is necessary as the blue badge is a legal document and CRPD's aim is to reduce the abuse of blue badges.

The Services team work in conjunction with the CRPD Enforcement Unit who collect expired blue badges to ensure that the CRPD database is kept up to date. During the year, 2,159 blue badges were collected by CRPD. Both the blue badge and the EU Disability card are printed by a professional printer and include several security elements aimed at further reducing the abuse of the cards due to copying.

As a result of Covid-19 restrictions blue badges were delivered and expired blue badges were collected in person as the CRPD offices have remained closed to clients to protect CRPD employees. Covid-19 has also led to a reduction in the number of EU Disability Cards and blue badges applications.

	2019	2020
Blue Badges Collected	2,501	2,159
Issued	2,615	2,171
Renewed	1,161	1,000
EU Disability Cards		
Issued	4,369	3,134
Renewals	1,480	1,168

EU Disability Cards Issued by Gender and Age

Age	Male	Female	X
0 - 4	29	14	
5 - 16	124	50	
17 - 30	116	80	
31 - 60	360	332	1
61+	1,004	1,024	

EU Disability Cards Issued by Gender and Impairment Type

Impairment	Male	Female	X
Physical	1,317	1,287	1
Hearing	113	113	
Visual	121	134	
Intellectual	290	237	
Psycho-social	249	197	

Blue Badges Issued by Gender and Age

Age	Male	Female	X
0 - 4	16	10	
5 - 16	67	29	
17 - 30	49	35	
31 - 60	247	246	1
61+	789	682	

Blue Badges Issued by Gender and Impairment Type

Impairment	Male	Female	X
Physical	1,052	916	1
Hearing	51	52	
Visual	85	96	
Intellectual	114	110	
Psycho-social	115	95	

UNCRPD Monitoring



Photo by Therese Debono

Malta signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol in March 2007, which were ratified in October 2012 and came into effect on 9 November 2012. The Commission for the Right of Persons with Disability (CRPD) was appointed the Independent Mechanism of the UNCRPD to protect, promote and monitor the implementation of the Convention.

The monitoring is carried out by the CRPD's UNCRPD and DET Unit. As part of its work, this Unit regularly consults

with persons with disability and their representative organisations to monitor the current situation in relation to various articles of the UNCRPD. This is mostly carried out through meetings and surveys sent to NGOs, DPOs and persons registered with CRPD, as well as meetings with the CRPD Consultative Committee of People with Intellectual Disability.

During 2020, this Unit issued a short survey on Article 24 of the UNCRPD – Education. This survey was sent to NGOs

and DPOs and to people registered with CRPD. The feedback received by the 195 respondents of this survey, which included mostly persons with disability as well as their parents and relatives, highlighted various important aspects and challenges encountered by persons with disability in the Maltese education system. A report of the results of this short survey was issued and published on CRPD's website and was also sent to relevant stakeholders.

This Unit has also continued working on a service-user evaluation of the residential homes of Aġenzija Sapport, as part of the monitoring work in relation to Article 19 of the UNCRPD – Living Independently and being included in the community. During 2020, this Unit carried out interviews with the residents as well as Leaders of the residential homes of Aġenzija Sapport, including Mosta, Żabbar, Mtarfa and Cospicua.

Due to the COVID-19 situation, the interviews had to be stopped, however these will be resumed as soon as it is possible.

This Unit regularly consults with persons with disability and their representative organisations to monitor the current situation

Further to the above, another short survey on Personal Assistants for Independent Living was issued in February 2020 in relation to Article 19 of the UNCRPD. This short survey was sent to NGOs and DPOs and to persons registered with CRPD. The results of the survey were analysed and will be used during an upcoming conference on Personal Assistants, which had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 situation.

DETs in 2020

The UNCRPD and DET Unit continued with the provision of Disability Equality Training (DET) sessions to various public and private entities in 2020, despite the COVID-19 situation. The majority of the training sessions were carried out online through video conferencing. The sessions are delivered by CRPD staff who have a disability and a number of video clips are also shown during the sessions. This Unit promotes Disability Equality training on an ongoing basis through emails sent to various public and private entities.

The UNCRPD and DET unit also regularly asks for feedback on the disability awareness raising sessions carried out by CRPD by sending a survey to contact persons of entities and organisation who have received this training. An evaluation report was issued in 2020, based on the feedback received through these surveys for training sessions delivered by CRPD in 2018 and 2019. The overall feedback received was positive and it shows that Disability Equality Training and other awareness-raising sessions are effective in raising more awareness on disability issues.

On another note, the feedback and recommendations which were put forward will be taken into consideration to improve the quality of the training which is currently being provided.

Further to the above, this Unit has also worked on the recording of a lecture to provide Disability Equality Training to staff working at Mater Dei Hospital. This recorded lecture, which also features clips on the experiences of persons with different disabilities in hospital settings, was finalised in the early months of 2020 and now forms part of the training delivered to staff working at MDH as part of an EU-funded Project. Throughout 2020, the recorded session was shown 38 times as part of the *Professional Interpersonal Skills with Patient and Relative Programme*, and 12 times as part of the *Managing People Professionally* course.

The table below shows all the Disability Equality Training sessions delivered during 2020:

Organisation	Date	Number of attendees
January - March 2020		
Żejtun Primary B	10 January	50
St Julian's Local Council	17 January	8
Birkirkara Primary <i>Kinder School</i>	24 January	30
Filming of DET session to MDH staff (EMCS)	27 January	20
ITS Students	3 February	30
Diversity Group GCHS, Higher Secondary	5 February	200
ITS Students	6 February	20
ITS Students	17 February	30
ITS Students	20 February	20
Outlook Coop	20 February	1
ITS Students	24 February	30
ITS Students	27 February	20
ITS Students	2 March	30
ITS Tour Guides	2 March	6
ITS Students	5 March	20
ITS Students	9 March	30
eCabs training to drivers	10 March	8
eCabs training	11 March	15
ITS Students	12 March	15
Ernst & Young <i>Skype session</i>	20 March	12
Outlook Coop	30 March	1
Gozo College Kerċem Primary School <i>Year 6</i>	13 January	20
ITS Gozo students	12 February	4
ITS Gozo students	19 February	4
ITS Gozo students	26 February	4
ITS Gozo students	4 March	4
ITS Gozo students	11 March	4

Organisation	Date	Number of attendees
April - June 2020		
ITS Guest Lecturer	20 April	8
ITS Guest Lecturer	23 April	8
ITS Tutorial	24 April	4
ITS Tutorial	29 April	5
ITS Guest Lecturer	30 April	10
UOM (Faculty of ICT) - Awareness Session on Web Accessibility	30 April	3
DET Police New Recruits	2 June	12
DET Police New Recruits	8 June	13
July- September 2020		
MCCAA	1 July	24, 22
Segretarjat Assistenza Soċjali	24 July	25
Segretarjat Assistenza Soċjali	27 July	32
MFCS	31 July	20
Outlook Coop	3 August	1
MEAD	24 August	2
Identity Malta	26 August	30
ESF Project - MDH staff extra session online	11 September	8
SCSA	16 September	12
Esplora	24 September	20
Pjazza Teatru Rjal - Arts Council Malta	30 September	5
NCFHE (National Commission for Further and Higher Education)	5 October	15, 12

October- December 2020		
eCabs	6 October	6
Commissioner for Children	7 October	4
eCabs	8 October	6
Ministry for European and Foreign Affairs	21 October	1
eCabs	6 November	8
eCabs	9 November	7
LESA new recruits	13 November	20
Palazzo Falson	16 November	1
eCabs	23 November	4
DET PC Recruits	24 November	33
DET PC Recruits	25 November	33
UOM (Faculty of ICT) Stakeholders meeting - Awareness session on web accessibility	16 December	20
Total		1,070



Photo by Therese Debono

The EU Projects Unit

ESF 2.63 Project Knowledge, Training, Communications And Support Measures In Support Of Vulnerable Groups

This project is being implemented by the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity. CRPD is one of the partner organisations involved in this project.

In 2020, CRPD worked on the following:

Research into the current situation of disabled people and employment in Malta

Throughout 2020, CRPD worked together with the research contractor, Ernst & Young in completing the project. Due to Covid-19, interviews with participants were difficult to arrange and the project was delayed. The findings of the research were published in February 2021, including the publication of guidelines for employers. A conference to publicise the work was also held in February 2021, when the research was completed.

Research on early intervention services in Malta

CRPD is working with the research contractor, Ernst & Young, to look at the early intervention services available

to disabled people in Malta and identify any unmet needs and gaps. Interviews have been held with the parents of disabled children and the analysis of these findings has been completed. Focus groups are being scheduled. As was the case with the employment research, Covid has led to difficulties in completing the project, which will be finalised in 2021.

Research on awareness of disability issues among professionals

CRPD together with the research contractor, Outlook Coop, have interviewed disabled people, academics and professionals in a variety of fields to discover the kind of barriers and challenges that disabled people face with regards to equitable access and use of products and services in Malta.

As a result of COVID-19, no CRPD employees were sent abroad for training during 2020.

Feedback Provided on Various Eu-Funded Projects

On the request of the Managing Authority, CRPD provided feedback on various ERDF and ESF-funded projects and how these can improve to better take into consideration disability issues.



Photo by Therese Debono

Autism Spaces For All Project

This project is being implemented by Prisms together with CRPD and other partner organisations. The main aim of this project is to create change in the community by adjusting environments to be more accessible to people with autism by:

- Providing professional guidance and accredited online training to employees on autism
- Creating an Autism-Friendly Award
- Creating a website and an app with information and location about the awarded services and shops.
- Throughout, an awareness campaign will be set up addressed to the service users of the awarded shops and services. The project consortium consists of Prisms, CRPD and Aġenzija Żgħażaġh in Malta, Learning Designers (Spain) and the Macedonian Scientific Society for Autism (Macedonia). The project is funded by Erasmus +.



Photo by Therese Debono

The CRPD Gozo Office

The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) also has a branch in Gozo, which is situated within the Gozo College Sannat Primary School. The Gozo office serves as a helpdesk, aiming to facilitate CRPD's services for disabled people, their families and caregivers living in Gozo.

Apart from providing information and services related to disability, CRPD's Gozo branch also promotes disabled people's rights by organizing info sessions, disability equality training, educational programmes and conferences.

During the year 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, educational school programmes held for students in year 6 (#NikbruFlimkien), year 7 (It's Ability Not Disability) and year 8 (Together we can do so much) were unable to be delivered, including those planned to be introduced within the primary church schools during 2020.

CRPD's Gozo branch also promotes disabled people's rights by organizing info sessions, disability equality training, educational programmes and conferences.

However, services such as EU Disability Card and Blue Badge applications, receiving and investigating complaints on discrimination, breach of the Equal Opportunities Act and violation of rights continued to be offered.

The ECDL course organized by CRPD for Gozitans with disability also continued delivering sessions online, providing a safer learning environment for our students. The annual Gozo disability conference planned for spring 2020 was also postponed and was held online in January 2021, focusing on employment and disability in Gozo.

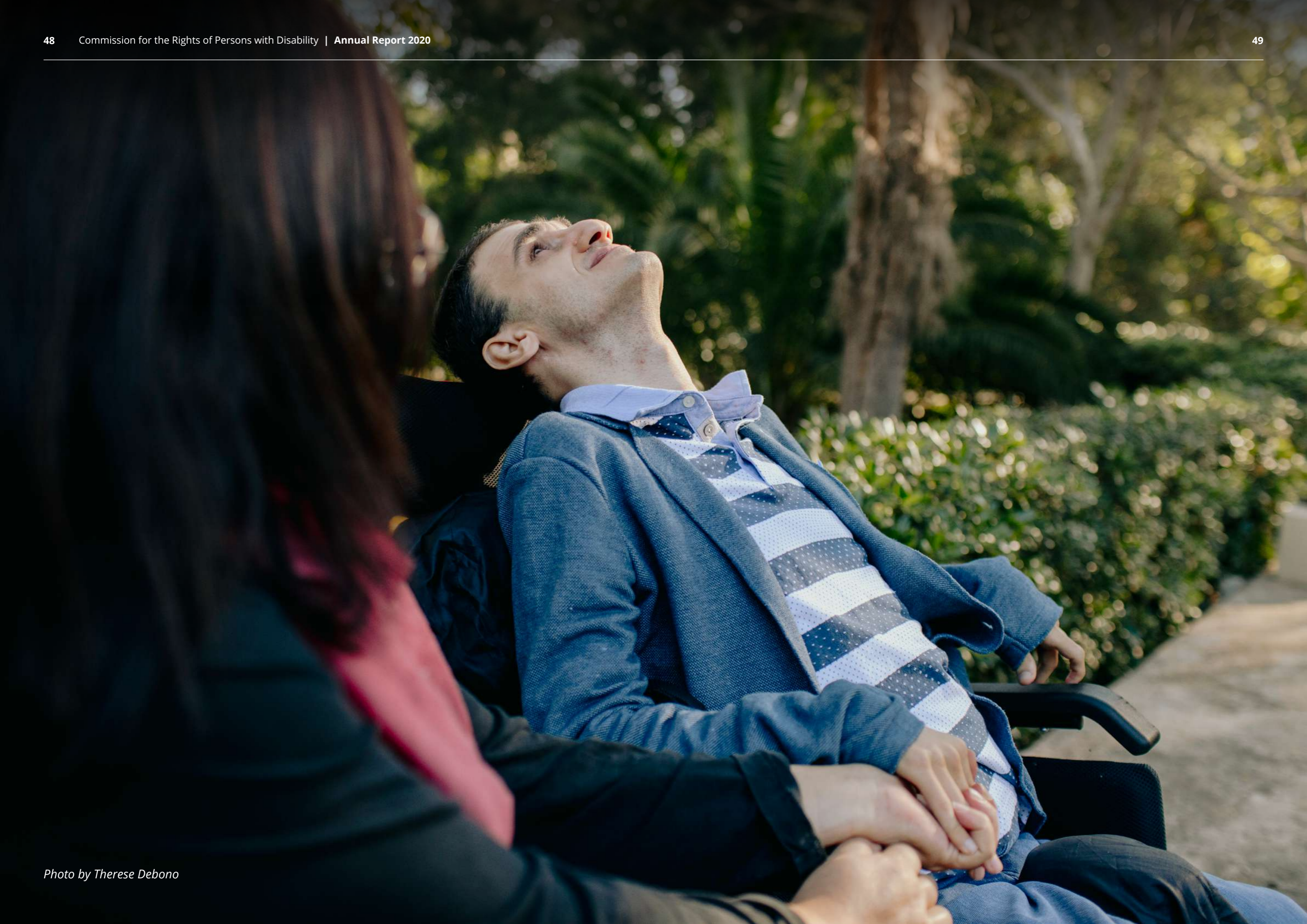


Photo by Therese Debono

CRPD Conferences

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the Commission had to rethink a number of conferences that had been planned for 2020. Some of these had to be postponed while others were shifted online.

Intersecting Identities: Intersectionality in the Disabled Community – 20 October 2020

The Faculty for Social Wellbeing together with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability hosted a webinar which was intended to bring to light socio-economic challenges that persons with disabilities are faced with when their narrative intersects with other experiences they might be faced with.

The aim of the webinar was to facilitate a number of policy recommendations aimed at ensuring the inclusion of persons with disability, even if they might have multiple minority experiences.

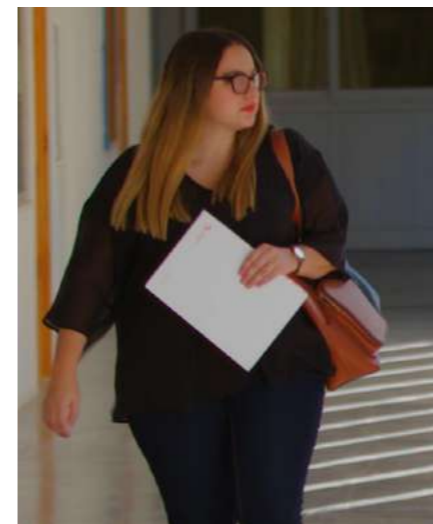
The webinar was attended by stakeholders (service users, service providers, researchers and academia) in the social and economic sectors, including those whose work focuses on disability issues, gender issues and sexuality, youth related transitions, the elderly, religion and ethnic diversity, migration, poverty and social exclusion.

The webinar narrative was woven around the stories of three persons with a disability who also represent three other minority groups: gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity.

These persons spoke not only on behalf of other persons who also belong to their specific minority groups but also on behalf of all persons with a disability who have complex identities composed of nuances, interests, aspirations and all those aspects that make us human beings.

The webinar was structured around people's stories, to convey the complexities and humanity of a person's identity, a discussion which, the Commission feels, was long overdue.

The webinar was also addressed by Mark Vicars, Associate Professor in the College of Arts & Education, Victoria University, Melbourne who delivered an eloquent keynote speech.



In search of community inclusion: young people with disabilities and relationships Webinar 1: The Friendships of Young People with Disabilities

This webinar series considers the importance for young people with disabilities to foster different types of relationships as a way of achieving community inclusion. The focus is on youth, since this is the phase in life when establishing lasting connections with people outside the family – by fostering friendships and other kind of relationships – is particularly important.

Founding friendships is an important – but often overlooked – way of ensuring that people with disabilities participate in their communities on an equal basis with others. In the first in three webinars, we discussed the friendships of young people with disabilities, what opportunities they have to make friends and to nurture relationships with their friends, and what factors act as barriers to friendship.

The first webinar was held on 3 December 2020, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, with another two webinars planned for March and June 2021, focusing on sexuality and parenting.

The webinar series is organised by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD); the Department of Disability Studies, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta; and Opening Doors Malta. All the webinars are structured and inspired by theatre, dance and music performances by Opening Doors Malta. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these were filmed and shown online during the webinar.

CRPD Awareness Campaigns



Maja Theuma
Photo by Darrin Zammit Lupi

Different is Normal

A photographic campaign which aimed to increase the visibility of persons with a disability by portraying them doing what they most enjoy in their everyday lives.

Commissioned by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with a Disability (CRPD), the campaign, 'Different is Normal', consisted of a set of 12 individual photos of persons with various impairments engaging in activities such as dance, theatre, swimming, gymnastics, sprinting and bowling.

Other shots featured people working on their aspirations: one young man was studying to become a chef; others show everyday moments such as a mother playing with her daughter or a woman walking with her husband.

The photos, taken by award-winning photographer Darrin Zammit Lupi,

included a range of physical and learning impairments such as spina bifida, Down Syndrome, hearing and visual impairments, ADHD and autism, also aim to open a direct window on the lives of persons with a disability, putting their individual stories at the centre.

In Malta, there are almost 20,000 persons with a disability registered by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with a Disability. Yet, disabled people are largely absent from images, TV, politics, leadership. While huge strides have been made, the images of disabled people in the public sphere are still largely invisible, with few persons with a disability taking an active role in public life.

This campaign set out to try and fill the gap in public representation. The photos were featured widely in the media and were also shown on a number of bus shelters.

Fi Kliemna 2

Following the success of *Diżabilità Astrofizika*, which received over 21,000 views on facebook, The Commission for the Rights of Persons with a Disability (CRPD) issued another call for participants to take part in the creation of a video clip to challenge perceptions on disability.

Just as with the first campaign, the process involved attending weekly sessions over a number of months, starting from the end of January 2020.

During the first few months, creative workshops were held to explore different writing styles, character building and acting. This was followed by a period of scriptwriting to develop a script and act it out. The process was led by well-known media producer Jon Mallia.

The video clip will be filmed and released to the public in 2021.



Maria Gauci
Photo by Darrin Zammit Lupi



Annemarie and Matthew Bugeja
Photo by Darrin Zammit Lupi

COVID-19 and its Effects on Persons with a Disability

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, CRPD commissioned a number of video clips to portray the lives of persons with a disability during the

COVID-19 pandemic and to remind policy makers that persons with a disability were to be included in all decisions.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Every year on 3 December, the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) joins the rest of the world in marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This year, the Commission adopted the United Nations' theme – Not all disabilities are visible - which aims to create more awareness about invisible disabilities.

"It is people who deserve respect – not the white cane, the crutch, the hearing aid, the blue badge or wheelchair," said CRPD Commissioner Oliver Scicluna in a message to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2020.

"The white cane, the crutch, the hearing aid, the blue badge, the wheelchair and other devices are a clear signal that a person has a disability. A lot of persons do

not use these assistive devices, however, but they still have a disability," he said.

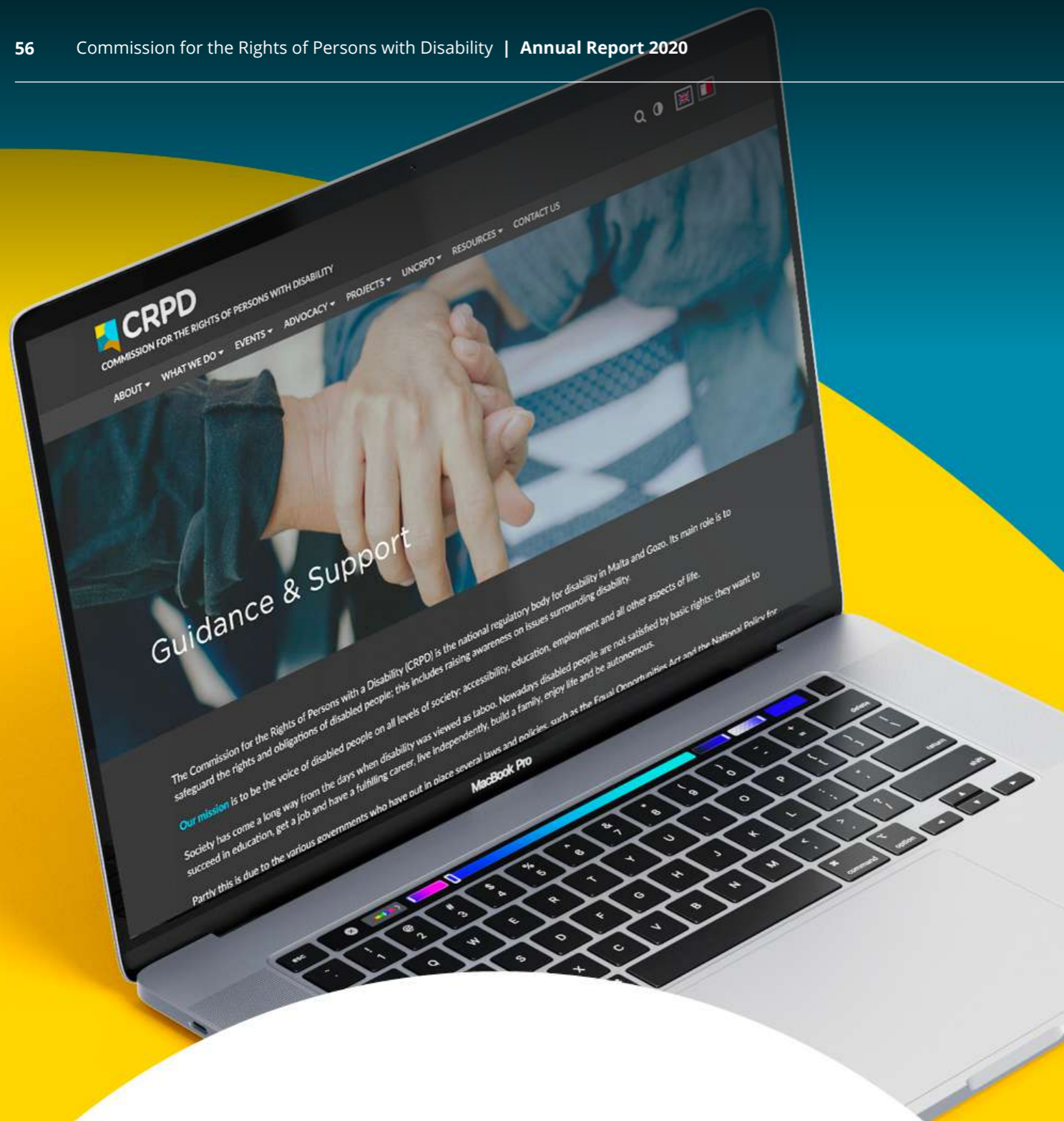
"Unfortunately society lives with stereotypes that often lead to prejudices. We should not be influenced by prejudices. An inclusive society is built on mutual respect without the need for persons to declare their disabilities."

The Commissioner was also joined by Prime Minister Robert Abela who spoke about the disability sector and how it was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Opposition Leader Bernard Grech also pledged his support. The Commission also organized a media campaign around this theme.



Samuel Farrugia
Photo by Darrin Zammit Lupi



[CRPD.ORG.MT](https://www.crpdm.org.mt)

CRPD's Digital Presence

At the end of 2020, the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) launched its new accessible website, reflecting a dynamic disability sector.

The new website is easier to navigate, with a simple layout and large images, designed with the various requirements of our users in mind. It provides up-to-date content on the work carried out by the Commission, its structure, projects, upcoming events and other useful information. It also provides direct links to CRPD's core work, such as requesting an investigation on alleged discrimination on the basis of disability or reporting inaccessible infrastructure.

Its stylish modern design, including real photography of persons with a disability in Malta and Gozo, also provides a new image for the disability sector in Malta and Gozo. It also provides information to the general public on the disability sector in general. The new website

aims to serve both as a showcase for the Commission's work but also as an entry point for users looking for up-to-date and relevant content on the disability sector in Malta and Gozo.

"CRPD's new website promotes a modern image for the disability sector, highlighting the richness and diversity that disability brings with it. It portrays the Commission's role as the national regulatory body for disability in Malta and Gozo while also emphasizing the humanity that is at the centre of our work," said CRPD Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan.

The website is a work in progress and is constantly being enriched with even more content, including stories of the everyday lives of persons with a disability.

CRPD also worked on increasing its social media presence through its digital channels, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and Youtube.

Budget Allocation and Staff Recruited

CRPD was allocated a government budget of EUR 1,240,000 in 2020.

The employees below joined CRPD in 2020:

Josette Azzopardi

*Investigations Team
detailed from public service*

Mario Borg

*DET
seconded from the
National Statistics Office*

CRPD was also represented on the Boards below:

ACCESS (Disability Committee UM)

Blue Badge Appeals Board

Car Registration Tax Exemption Board

Empowerment Board

Equinet

FITA

Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools

FSWS

Housing Authority Scheme 7

Housing Authority Board

ITS Admissions

Jobsplus

Joint Technical Committee CEN-CENELEC/ JTC
11 "Accessibility in the built environment"
prEN 17210

Lino Spiteri Foundation

MCAST

NCFHE

NSO PAF Board

Paralympic Committee

PEKTUR

Planning Authority's Users Committee
(discussing procedures adopted by the authority)

RCABS Board

Reserved Parking

Road Safety (Transport Malta)

SAC Board

Statementing Appeals Board

Transport Malta

The Council and the Senate (UM)

International Conferences

A list of some of the international conferences attended by CRPD representatives:

Casablanca/ Morocco	UN Development Conference on ICF Changeover	20/01/2020	Physical
Zagreb / Croatia	EU - Participation of women in the labour market – benefit to society	30/01/2020	Physical
USA / Switzerland	UN and WHO - Covid-19 and Disability - A UN response - Persons with disability cannot be left behind	15/04/2020	Online
Brussels	EDF Lockdown measures during COVID-19: how it affects persons with disabilities	21/04/2020	Online
Brussels	The Istanbul Convention: preventing and combating violence against women and girls with disabilities	08/05/2020	Online
Brussels	EDF COVID-19, women with disabilities and employment	14/05/2020	Online
Brussels	EDF Human Rights violations of persons with disabilities during COVID-19	18/05/2020	Online
Brussels	European Commission: Stakeholders Consultation The Future European Disability Strategy	08/07/2020	Online
Brussels	Why is the EU still investing in institutions for disabled people?	21/09/2020	Online
Brussels	EDF Advocating for strong national adoption of the European Accessibility Act	30/09/2020	Online
New York	UN Covid Seminar	21/10/2020	Online
Brussels	Concluding meeting with Commissioner Dalli on the new Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	11/11/2020	Online
Germany	European Inclusion Summit - The Federal Government Commissioner for Matters relating to Persons with Disabilities	17/11/2020	Online
France	UNESCO International Symposium on inclusive education for learners with disabilities	27/11/2020	Online
USA	Queering the COSP. An Intersectional Inclusive Perspective: LGBTI persons with disabilities and their rights - UN Conference of States Parties on the CRPD	30/11/2020	Online



Photo by Therese Debono