One Voice

Official Voice of the National Federation for the disability sector

Issue 2 – January 2019

The President's Trust

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Credits and the President's Message:

One Voice is a magazine published by the Malta Federation of Organisations Persons with Disability (MFOPD).

As its title implies, the magazine is the official, unified voice of Malta's civil society working in the disability sector. It portrays the mission and vision of the various Organisations active in this sphere as represented by their umbrella Federation.

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Front Page Photos:

At the top the Signing Ceremony of the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding between MFOPD and The President's Trust and at the bottom the signing for the first time of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Malta Employers Association and Mr Michael Evans under the supervision of Her Excellency the President of the Republic of Malta, Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, July 2018.

The theme for the 2018 International Day for Persons with Disability was ***"Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality".***

The theme of the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2019 convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, to be held in July will be ***"Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality".***

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)'s Article 29 (Participation in political and public life) stipulates that:

"States parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others".

States can guarantee this access in several ways:

- Ensure that voting procedures, facilities, and materials are appropriate, accessible, and easy to understand and use
- Protect the right to vote by secret ballot, without intimidation
- Ensure that persons with disabilities have the support they need to exercise the right to vote
- Secure the right to stand for elections, to effectively hold office, and perform all public functions at all levels of government
- Facilitate the use of assistive and new technologies, as needed.

Persons with disability, including here in Malta, are still finding the elections not accessible to them. During last year's International Day for Persons with Disability, the European Disability Forum (EDF) launched the petition "European Elections for All". EDF calls for action from EU Governments – this includes Malta's Government – to make the EU elections accessible for all.

MFOPD is the Malta representative on various EU fora, including EDF. Our Federation fully supports EDF's petition. Moreover, MFOPD calls for action from our Government to make all elections – EU, national, local and any others – accessible for all.

Disability is no reason to directly or indirectly deny a person's voting rights. Persons with disability have a voice and for no reason, be it voluntarily or non-voluntarily, should they be deprived from their right to vote. Voting is the most important way to make our voice heard on issues that concern us. Voting gives us an opportunity to be part of decision-making that affects our life. If we do not vote, others will make the decisions for us: decisions are made on our behalf every day. It is very important for each and every one of us to make our one voice heard on our issues.

Last September, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disability presented and published its concluding observations on the initial report of Malta. One particular recommendation to our Government (point 42) refers to the participation of persons with disability in political and public life.

The Federation hopes to see this recommendation taken fully on board and dealt with as soon as possible for all Maltese persons with disability to access our voting system.

Ms Marthese Mugliette
President - MFOPD

Excerpts from

Dr Adolf Ratzka, Ph.D.

Independent Living Institute, Sweden
personal comment on Personal Assistance

Dr Adolf D Ratzka is amongst others, the founder and Director of the Institute on Independent Living, Sweden : the founding Chair of the European Network on Independent Living (ENIL): the founder and Chair of Stockholm Cooperative for Independent Living (STIL). He lectured on disability and self-determination issues in over 30 countries.

Today, many countries' governments claim they offer such services to their citizens with extensive impairments. But do these services provide the quantity and the quality that enables those who require assistance in the activities of daily living, "to live independently and be included in the community as others", in the words of the CRPD?

Persons with extensive impairments need assistance from other people to mitigate the effects of their physical, sensory, cognitive or psychosocial limitations. Depending on type and extent of an individual's impairment assistance might be required to enable us to carry out activities of daily living such as getting up in the morning, getting dressed, going to the toilet, eating or communicating in the case of non-verbal persons. These activities form the most basic requirements for survival. But to participate and be included in family and society and live with the same conditions as non-disabled family members, friends, neighbors requires also assistance for such activities as to engage in social, recreational, cultural or political activities, educate ourselves, work or travel. For persons with cognitive or psychosocial impairments supported decision-making or help with structuring one's day might be required.

Personal assistance can do wonders, can be the key to "living independently and being included in the community" for persons with extensive disabilities who otherwise would have no future to look forward to. Personally, I was extremely fortunate to have had personal assistance since the age of 22.

What is "personal" about personal assistance

The differences between conventional generalized community-based services and personal assistance originate from how persons who require the services are seen by their families, professionals, experts, politicians and the general public. Are we mainly seen as static objects of care and protection or as dynamic individuals capable of personal growth and of learning to take more responsibility for our lives and to make decisions in our own best interest? Depending on these views, we will be kept in residential institutions; live in the community but be limited in what we can do in our lives by a minimum of services over which we have no control; or be entrusted with Direct Payments for personal assistance services which we can adapt to our changing requirements.

The Social Model of Disability recognizes that personal characteristics and circumstances, together with the impairment, interact with the person's physical and attitudinal environment. The same impairment can result in many different types and degrees of disadvantage in a given physical, socio-economic and political environment depending on personality, family background, gender, age, duties, personal resources, a person's roles, one's preferences, aspired lifestyle, etc. Personal assistance is to mitigate this disadvantage and to enable the person with an impairment to live and be included in the community, with family, work and interests with the same degree of self-determination that others take for granted.

As a consequence, needs assessment of personal assistance has to take into account not only a person's impairment but also the obstacles in society that have a bearing on the individual's ability to function as a family member and citizen given the obligations, roles, and expectations that make each person a unique human. Personal assistance is directed at the whole person.

Personal means the money follows the user, not the service provider

To put assistance users in control of their services, the needs assessment in terms of the average number of required assistance hours has to be translated into the hours' corresponding monetary value. Periodic cash payments in these amounts, Direct Payments, from the government to the person requiring assistance services, give users the purchasing power and the resulting freedom of choice and flexibility they require to employ persons of their choice as personal assistants or to hire services from a provider of personal assistance services of their choice: the local government, a not-for-profit charity, a for-profit company, a personal assistance user cooperative or a combination of all. Recipients have to be able to freely change their assistance solution and swap service providers in accordance with changing life circumstances and preferences.

Users' self-determination rests on Direct Payments. Empowered by Direct Payments users are in charge. They choose their preferred assistance solution. They shape their services' organizational and administrative design. They decide how much administrative responsibility over their assistance's daily operations they are prepared to assume for the time being. They determine among how many assistants they allocate their assistance hours. They choose which assistants they invite into their private lives, homes, and families to provide household help, to assist with bodily needs, with the physical aspects of raising small children, to accompany them to school and work, when visiting friends, engaging in leisure activities and traveling. All these decisions are made by the user according to momentary individual circumstances and requirements, as interpreted by the user.

Without Direct Payments, when the money follows the service provider, we cannot take these decisions, we are not in control, are made dependent on other persons' decision, their insight into our lives, their interpretations of our requirements. We may apply, complain, beg and plea but we do not have the final word.

Many community-based service providers prepare their staff for working with clients in a uniform general training course. To assume that a generic training program will enable assistants to work for any user is naive and reveals ignorance of what personal assistance is about because it assumes that assistance users have similar requirements, similar bodies, personal resources, tastes and preferences, aspirations and dreams - in short, it negates our uniqueness as human beings. That assumption is de-humanizing.

Often, training courses taught by service providers to new assistants are medically oriented informing new assistants of the most common diagnoses and their consequences for required assistance. Also, there might be instructions as to how persons are to be lifted into bed, helped on the toilet, etc. Obviously, this type of generic training is not very helpful to users who already have developed their own techniques for certain situations. Assistants' training and previous work experience as assistants can interfere with learning a new user's long-established routines. Relearning requires sometimes more time and effort, on the assistant's and user's part, than learning a new way of doing things from scratch.

Where service providers, including those who consider themselves part of the Independent Living movement, take on the functions of recruiting, training and scheduling personal assistants, their clients are deprived of the most essential means to influence the quality of their personal assistance service and thus the quality of their lives.

The term "personal assistance" is abused. We, users of personal assistance, our friends, families, our organizations and allies should not settle for less than true personal assistance. The quality of our lives is at stake.

Personal experience as an LSE

Rita Sciberras

For me, being a Learning Support Educator has been not only my source of income for the past 13 years but also my passion.

At the beginning of each scholastic year, I am always excited to learn which student I will be assisting along the year. Last year I was assigned to support Ann, an eleven-year-old girl with Down Syndrome. Ann's excitement to start school and her mother's dedication towards her education were the reason why the Head of School granted permission to Ann to come to school and meet her teachers and me a day before the school opened for students.

Ann's smile stole my heart, and from the very first moment, I met her, I knew that working with her was going to be a pleasant, fulfilling experience. After a few minutes speaking to her mother, I could tell that, as an LSE, I am going to find the backing and support which is needed from the parents' side for the correct continuum in education. Being a mother myself, I could understand the mother's concerns regarding her daughter's education, integration in school, and the development of her independent living skills.

Ann's sweet character was vital to building a good rapport with her. Albeit her ability to communicate verbally was somewhat limited, she always found a way to express her feelings and needs and thus made it easier for me to assist her. Part of my duty as an LSE is to make the most of the student's ability while helping in developing others.

Despite her limitations, during most lessons, Ann was very eager to participate. I used to feel very proud watching her contributing to the lesson, and I did my best to empower her to enhance her academic abilities. My greatest satisfaction was when I would note even the slightest improvement. On the other hand, my heart would break seeing Ann watching other students play during the break-time yet not including her in their group, perhaps due to her disability.

Although like any other job, being an LSE could be tiring, Ann's smile and hug every morning made every minute working with her worthwhile.

(Ann is a fictitious name)

Ten Talents of an LSE

Tanja Cilia

What does it take to be an LSE – apart from a degree? Here is a checklist that helps build trust and empathy.

> **"No, I do not plan to do any work today. According to my IEP, I only have to complete work on 3 out of 5 days, with 75% accuracy, in a variety of different settings."**

1. **Adaptability**. Compare the school day to a lie television show – anything can happen. A child may – and will – have tantrums, the munchies, fidgets, hospital appointments he cannot miss, an aversion to leaving class for break or specific lessons… an LSE must be able to think ahead. And be as flexible as the situation requires.

2. **Calm**. Noise and movement annoy some children who have disabilities. Add this to learning and behavioural issues and you have a recipe for potential disaster. Keeping one's head and creating a serene ambiance for the child is important.

3. **Confidence**. Some children with disabilities may have emotional or intellectual problems. When their LSE is flustered, the effect on them is compounded. It is vital that the LSE takes setbacks in her stride, to avoid creating a vicious circle.

4. **Creativity**. Lessons need not be solely reading and writing. Some children handle learning better when it is tangible and done hands-on, or done with visuals, on a computer, according to the learning style of the child.

5. **Deadline-orientation**. A basic version of the IEP means that schedules and goals create expectations and goals that some children can understand.

6. **Dedication**. Some children are frustrated and give up when they consider a task beyond them. The LSE, albeit possibly sharing this feeling, must offer encouragement and hope, and celebrate even the smallest victory.

7. **Even temper**. A classroom environment is stressful for the teacher, let alone for the child with a disability. LSEs, moreover, will be in constant contact with the parents, some of whom will insist that the teacher does what they want, and not what they think is best, for the child.

8. **Good sense of humour**. An LSE may be able to pacify a child by distracting him and finding something amusing to show or say, to prevent a melt-down.

9. **Intuition**. Children with disabilities might find it difficult to express their emotions, either because of the nature of their disability, or because they lack communication skills. An LSE's skills will help her identify feelings of fear, frustration, anger, negativity or distress.

10. **Organisation**. An LSE will use colour-coded folders for different topics, and labels for different sections, because structure is important for the child. She will not do one mammoth exercise of filing at the end of each month, but will put each paper where it belongs, as soon as it is created / used. The communication notebook will have a plastic pocket attached to the inside of the front cover, for circulars and other school documents.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WORK

By Dr John M. Cachia
MD MSc FFPH, Commissioner
for Mental Health, Malta

Scientific literature shows that 1) work is generally good for health, provided it is a good quality job, 2) unemployment is highly correlated to poor mental well-being, common mental disorders (e.g. depression and anxiety), higher alcohol intake, drug use, and suicidal behaviours and, that 3) for people who have experienced mental health disorders, maintaining or returning to employment in a good quality job can also be a vital element in the recovery process, helping to build self-esteem, confidence and social inclusion.

Data from the European Framework for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing (2016) shows that among the EU Member States there is a growing incidence of work-related mental disorders, as well as increased absence from work and early retirement due to mental illness. The estimated proportion of workforce in Europe that may be living with a mental health problem is around one or two in five. 55% of people with mental health problems make unsuccessful attempts to return to work and, of those who return, 68% have less responsibility, work fewer hours and are paid less than before.

Workplaces are therefore both a major factor in the development of mental and physical health problems but also a platform for the introduction and development of appropriate preventive measures. It is fundamental that a comprehensive approach focuses not only on the problems but also on the positive state of mental well-being provided by work: the ability to work productively, the capacity to realize one's own potential and make a contribution to the community.

In the EU Compass Project undertaken in Member States in 2017 highlighted that cross-sector partnership and cooperation is highly needed for better health policy development in the area of mental health in the workplace and for promoting good working conditions as drivers for business excellence and competitiveness. There is room for improvement in the development of platforms to facilitate experience exchange between stakeholders (health, social, education, workplaces) and also on the development of support services to gradually reintegrate employees after long-term absence.

Examples in prevention and promotion include:

- awareness-raising initiatives offering tools for companies to assess the risks and implement preventative measures;
- interventions for the reduction of stress and sick leave and increase productivity by identifying and tackling risk factors at work.
- improving employers' and employees' knowledge and skills on healthy work-and-life styles.
- mental health promotion networks that build capacity and reduce inequalities for workers and unemployed.

Examples in reintegration/return to work include

- Individual Placement and Support (IPS) to enable people with severe and/or chronic mental ill health to enter and/or remain in the competitive labour market.
- Peer-to-peer courses designed to prepare people who experienced mental health problems to be employed in peer support roles and support others in their recovery.
- Courses for leaders and union representatives to learn how to cope with employees with mental health problems in the workplace.

Further work should include better coordinated strategies; improvements in the interface between healthcare and social security systems; the dissemination of good risk management practices and comprehensive multi-modal approaches based on evidence; evaluation of interventions; addressing the specific needs of SMEs; improved clarity in legal requirements for employers and employees and their respective organisations; and promoting the positive benefits of a healthy work environment for business and societal sustainability, raising awareness on the positive impact of good mental health and the need for fighting stigmatization

There are several good practice examples from Malta. Local entities are recognising the value of counselling and support services for staff, but most seem to prefer access to care from external resources due to stigma issues, since being identified as a person who requires / seeks help can be interpreted (wrongly) as a sign of weakness or as indication that one is no longer fit for the job. Such programmes must be accompanied by initiatives aimed at promoting a stigma free culture. A priority area for action in recent years has been mental health and well-being training provided by Mental Health First Aid courses, developed locally by Richmond Foundation.

The Employee Support Programme (People and Standards Division of the OPM) provides free-of-charge psychological support to all public employees experiencing mental health problems which are interfering with their work-life balance. It is positive that the public service is acting as a model employer providing training and awareness sessions on the importance of employee well-being and better mental health; individual counselling and psychological support for public employees; return-to-work support following a period of long-term sickness absence due to mental health issues or chronic physical illness; practical assistance to both the employee and their department to ensure a smooth transition back to work; support after traumatic and critical incidents such as death at work or other types of trauma.

Social partners in the context of a dialogue brokered by my Office in 2018 has led to the signing of a joint declaration between representatives of workers and employers on 9th October 2018 wherein mental wellbeing is recognised as a fundamental part of the health of an individual. Social partners agreed that there is a pressing need for joint action to chart a way forward on this complex issue and they have declared their commitment to work productively together with the aim of implementing the necessary measures to improve workplace mental wellbeing, in the best interests of both employers and workers. My Office intends to support initiatives taken by social partners to implement this written undertaking.

In 2017 we set in motion the national #StopStigma campaign. This campaign was built on the notion that as a society we need to break the silence around the issue of mental health. Mental illness should not impede persons from seeking and retaining gainful employment. It is however necessary that we recognise and support persons passing through such difficulties and their families without any discrimination and respecting fully their rights to be treated with equity and justice.

September 2018 –

Malta Reviewed by the UN's CRPD Committee

Dr Alistaire De Gaetano

Dr Alistair de Gaetano is currently Advisor to the Parliamentary Secretary for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, focusing mainly on legislative and policy reform, and responsible for the restructuring of the national disability Focal Point Office into the Office for Disability Issues (ODI). He is also Chairperson of the Autism Advisory Council.

Dr de Gaetano also coordinated Malta's review by the UN's CRPD Committee in September 2018. He is Malta's representative on the EU's Disability High-Level Group (DHLG), and a member of Malta's Bioethics Consultative Committee.

A fresh pair of eyes is never a bad thing. We often find ourselves missing the wood for the trees, when our daily existence constantly revolves around a number of regular scenarios, over and over and over again. Which is why the United Nations builds in regular wake-up calls into its human rights treaty mechanisms – constructive dialogues that take place with member states, following periodic reporting, as part of a country review process.

In terms of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), Malta underwent said dialogue for the first time in September 2018, after having submitted its first periodic report in 2014. As was the case with a number of other countries previously reviewed by the UN's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the ensuing constructive dialogue was far from a walk in the park.

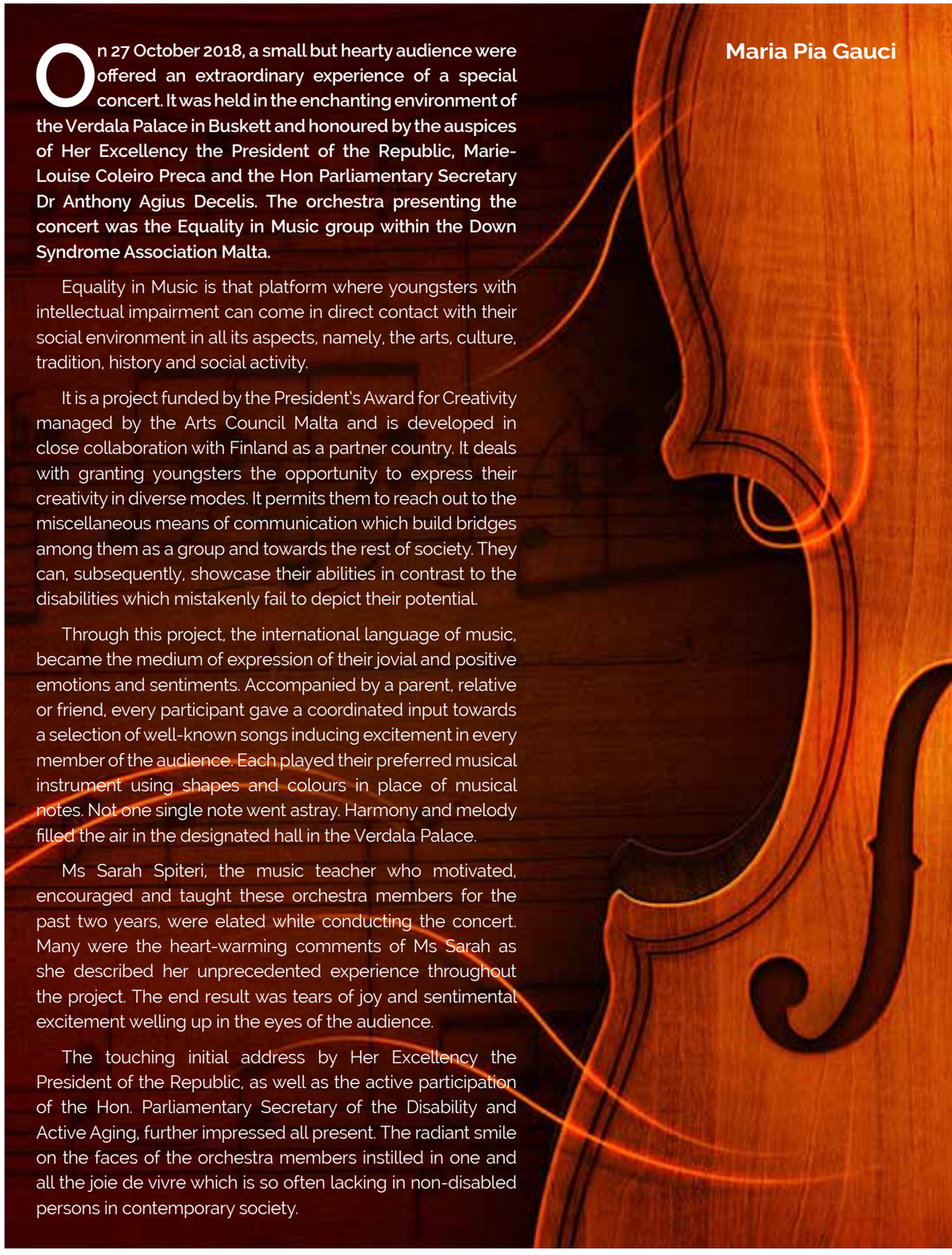
However, although one might put this down to the work of a Committee composed of radical-academic exponents, a good shake-up by the Committee, when seen in perspective, provides ample food for thought, and a wealth of advice on which to continue building the reforms initiated over the past years.

The Committee did not disappoint, and as always, did not fail to address its pet topics, such as personal autonomy, independent living and the rights of persons with psychosocial disability (stemming from mental health distress), as well as institutional reforms. On the other hand, it commended developments in the legislative field, Malta's designation of sign language as an official language, and the increase in publications in Easy Read format.

It also took a positive view on planned legislative reforms to strengthen the area of personal autonomy, and individual Committee members offered to continue informal dialogue and mentoring by way of follow-up.

Personally, I believe that Malta now has a golden opportunity to build upon a solid experience in Geneva last summer. Though the road ahead is long and winding, there is nothing that should throw us off it after we have come this far, if Government continues to pursue stakeholder-informed decision-making.

Concert by Equality in Music



On 27 October 2018, a small but hearty audience were offered an extraordinary experience of a special concert. It was held in the enchanting environment of the Verdala Palace in Buskett and honoured by the auspices of Her Excellency the President of the Republic, Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca and the Hon Parliamentary Secretary Dr Anthony Agius Decelis. The orchestra presenting the concert was the Equality in Music group within the Down Syndrome Association Malta.

Equality in Music is that platform where youngsters with intellectual impairment can come in direct contact with their social environment in all its aspects, namely, the arts, culture, tradition, history and social activity.

It is a project funded by the President's Award for Creativity managed by the Arts Council Malta and is developed in close collaboration with Finland as a partner country. It deals with granting youngsters the opportunity to express their creativity in diverse modes. It permits them to reach out to the miscellaneous means of communication which build bridges among them as a group and towards the rest of society. They can, subsequently, showcase their abilities in contrast to the disabilities which mistakenly fail to depict their potential.

Through this project, the international language of music, became the medium of expression of their jovial and positive emotions and sentiments. Accompanied by a parent, relative or friend, every participant gave a coordinated input towards a selection of well-known songs inducing excitement in every member of the audience. Each played their preferred musical instrument using shapes and colours in place of musical notes. Not one single note went astray. Harmony and melody filled the air in the designated hall in the Verdala Palace.

Ms Sarah Spiteri, the music teacher who motivated, encouraged and taught these orchestra members for the past two years, were elated while conducting the concert. Many were the heart-warming comments of Ms Sarah as she described her unprecedented experience throughout the project. The end result was tears of joy and sentimental excitement welling up in the eyes of the audience.

The touching initial address by Her Excellency the President of the Republic, as well as the active participation of the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary of the Disability and Active Aging, further impressed all present. The radiant smile on the faces of the orchestra members instilled in one and all the joie de vivre which is so often lacking in non-disabled persons in contemporary society.

Michael Evans

Supported Employment

Introduction

Supported Employment is a method of working with disabled people and other disadvantaged groups to access and maintain paid employment in the open labour market. This method of working is a proactive policy in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

This article will endeavour to explain the differences with this methodology and other support mechanisms currently being used around Europe and will provide the position of the European Union of Supported Employment regarding the values, standards and process of Supported Employment.

Background

The concept, principles and values of Supported Employment are based on the early work from North America which demonstrated that people with significant learning disabilities could perform a variety of complex tasks, highlighting the potential and capabilities of people with learning disabilities to participate in paid work in the open labour market. Due to the success of Supported Employment assisting people with learning disabilities to access and maintain employment, the model was developed and expanded to include all areas of disability and disadvantage.

In the late 1980's, the model transferred across the Atlantic to Europe and a number of disability organisations in various European countries successfully piloted Supported Employment projects funded mainly under European Union programmes such as Helios and Horizon.

The European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE) was formed in 1993 and has developed its structure since that time. The definition of Supported Employment in Europe is recognised as:

"Providing support to people with disabilities or other disadvantaged groups to secure and maintain paid employment in the open labour market" Source: EUSE 2005.

Values and Principles

Supported Employment is completely consistent with the concepts of empowerment, social inclusion, dignity and respect for individuals. Within Europe, agreement has been reached on the values and principles that should be present at all Supported Employment stages and activities and adhere to full citizenship rights of individuals:

Individuality – Supported Employment regards everyone as unique, with his/her own interests, preferences, conditions and life history

Respect – Supported Employment activities are always age appropriate, dignifying and enhancing

Self-determination – Supported Employment assists individuals to improve their interests and preferences, express their choices and define their employment / life plan according to personal and contextual conditions. It promotes the principles of self-advocacy by service users

Informed Choice – Supported Employment assists individuals to understand their opportunities fully so they can choose consistently within their preferences and with an understanding of the consequences of their choices

Empowerment – Supported Employment assists individuals to make decisions on their lifestyle and participation in society. Individuals are centrally involved in the planning, evaluation and development of services

Confidentiality – The Supported Employment service provider considers information given by individuals to them as confidential. The service user has access to his/her personal information gathered by the provider and any disclosure is at the discretion of and with the agreement of the individual

Flexibility – Staff and organisational structures can change according to the needs of service users. Services are flexible and responsive to the needs of individuals and can be adapted to meet specific requirements

Accessibility – Supported Employment services, facilities and information are fully accessible to all people with disabilities.

Supported Employment Process

The values and principles of Supported Employment are supported and developed by a 5-stage process/methodology that has been identified and acknowledged as a European model of good practice which can be used as the framework within Supported Employment.

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Stage 1. Engagement – Underpinned by the core values of accessibility to ensure informed choices are made. The stage of Engagement involves the initial meeting with a potential job seeker and to discuss employment aspirations, motivation and possible support needs

Stage 2. Vocational Profiling – Ensuring empowerment to the individual throughout the process. The stage of Vocational Profiling is to assess the needs of the job seeker and identify their job preferences, employment strengths and weaknesses and any levels of support that may be required

Stage 3. Job Finding – Self-determination and informed choice are key values in Supported Employment. This stage involves both the job seeker and the Supported Employment service using both formal and informal methods of job finding and engaging with employers

Stage 4. Employer Engagement – Accessibility, flexibility and confidentiality are key values to be nurtured through this process. Employer Engagement will endeavour to 'match' a job seeker to a potential job vacancy. Considerations will be given to the type of job involved, hours of work, wages and the support needs of both the employer and the potential employee

Stage 5. On/Off Job Support – Flexibility, confidentiality and respect are the key components to successful support measures. Support measures particularly refer to when the individual is in paid employment and are delivered through the provision of an Employment Support Worker/Job Coach. The stage of On/Off the Job Support often separates Supported Employment services from other more mainstream employment services. Provision of support is given to both the employer and the employee and the frequency of any support and the duration of support is usually determined by the Supported Employment service and the Job Coach.

Position of the European Union of Supported Employment

The European Union of Supported Employment promotes the concept of Supported Employment as a vehicle/methodology to assist disabled and disadvantaged people access their right to work.

Whilst there are slight variations of the definition across the world, there remain three consistent elements that are fundamental to the European Supported Employment model:

1. Paid Work - Individuals should receive commensurate pay for work carried out – if a country operates a national minimum wage then the individual must be paid at least this rate or the going rate for the job
2. Open Labour Market – People with disabilities should be regular employees with the same wages, terms and conditions as other employees who are employed in businesses/organisations within the public, private or voluntary sectors
3. Ongoing Support - This refers to job support in its widest concept whilst in paid employment. Support is individualised and is on a need's basis for both the employee and the employer

Summary

Supported Employment is a method of intervention which assists individuals with disability or disadvantage to access paid jobs in the open labour market. There are clearly stated values and principles with ethical guidelines for professionals to ensure that the needs of the individual are paramount regarding all decisions in relation to the Supported Employment process.

I am aware of some of the issues encountered in Malta regarding the establishment of a genuine Supported Employment service. As we begin 2019 it is quite disappointing that such a service has not yet been established in Malta; there are some services that have some of the elements of Supported Employment as described in this article, but none have all the components and values and therefore cannot yet be considered as Supported Employment.

Michael John Evans Chartered Fellow FCIPD
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3 January 2019

Accessibility: Understanding the Qualities of Hospitality and Service Today in Tourism

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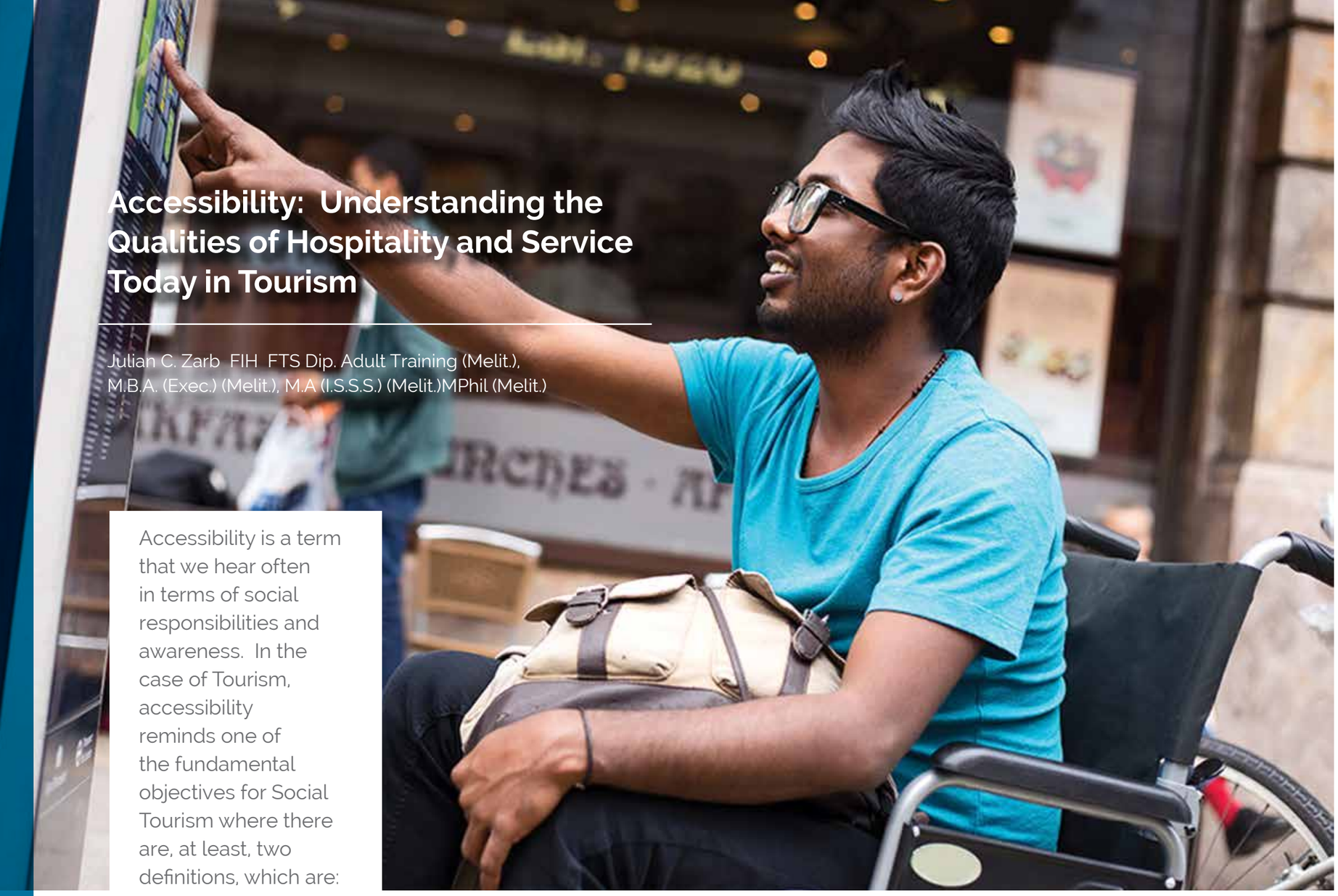

Accessibility is a term that we hear often in terms of social responsibilities and awareness. In the case of Tourism, accessibility reminds one of the fundamental objectives for Social Tourism where there are, at least, two definitions, which are:

"The connections and phenomena related to the participation of people in the countries or destinations as well as of holidaymakers, of disadvantaged layers of society or those unable to participate in tourism, holidays and their advantages for whatever reason".

ISTO

"Refers to programmes, events, and activities that enable all population groups – and particularly youth, families, retirees, individuals with modest incomes, and individuals with restricted physical capacity – to enjoy tourism, while also attending to the quality of relations between visitors and host communities".
Prof. L. Jolin (University of Quebec – Montreal)

In these two definitions there is a perception that accessibility means giving special attention to visitors above others. This is a perception which needs to be explained in more depth. When we make tourism accessible it is not about creating separate levels of hospitality and service for different visitors, nor is it about segmenting the visitor profile, rather it is about understanding what hospitality and services are really about.

Today, unfortunately the terms – Hospitality and Service – are limited to two sectors within the tourism activity, these being Hotels and Catering Services. Hospitality and Service are two qualities which every citizen or member of a host community must practice when encountering visitors or even fellow citizens.

Hospitality and Service do not cost anything, they simply mean that we are approachable, accessible and understanding of all other persons around us.

The idea that we ought to treat persons with mental or physical disabilities any different to other members of the host or visitor societies goes against the very principles of what tourism stands for. Tourism is not simply a socio-economic industry but, in reality, it is a socio-cultural activity where the host and visitor exchange experiences .

Let us make sure we go back to basics and offer hospitality and service to our visitors and fellow citizens without seeking material rewards or favours. Accessibility for all and also for people with special needs is part of the service and hospitality we should offer all our guests. Above all, if hospitality and service does come at a cost and a subsequent fee then our responsibility is to ensure that there is real value for money.

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The Human Personification of Spring - Adam

Anna-Maria Collison

I have known and lived with persons with a disability my entire life so there was no shock or disbelief when I discovered my son was yet another member with a disability. And somehow, it was a normality for me.

Both cases in my family, my sister and my son, are marked with an extremely successful outcome. My parents were great in their positivity and I would like to think this was passed on to me. They had been through it and could understand and stay by me. For me, the only difference I was conceiving was in appearance. My first experience was one with a physical disability and the other intellectual.

In Adam's case it's intellectual. However, I am blessed by the fact that Adam is thriving. He attended a church school and always had an LSE. He copes very well with school. I always wanted Adam to at least try subjects and see how far he would manage with them.

From the social aspect, Adam has always been very much involved. He's done so much tennis, cricket, swimming, dancing, drama, computer and karate. He recently achieved a trophy and brown belt and we are all very proud of his achievements.

Adam currently attends Wardija Resource Centre where he can learn further skills that will take him through to the next stage in life. The positive atmosphere that surrounds him makes us all sure that further goals will be achieved.

"It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters." (Epictetus)

The positive side of Dementia

Can there be a positive side to an illness, condition or anything that we normally view as unfortunate or bad luck? What about dementia? What possibly could be positive about this? Well, for anyone who has had a relative or family member, or looks after people with dementia in Homes, they will know that a ray of light is always there. Having been through the experience with my mother who died after 12 years, I can truly say that LOVE was and will always remain the most positive of her last few years.

Grieving someone with dementia is part of the experience because you know you are losing that person slowly. They stop recognising you and act in an unfamiliar way. People ask me what to do and my answer is always 'Love them! Love them with all your heart and soul; enjoy every minute you have with them; take them to their favourite places; talk with them about the most wonderful moments in your lives; hug them; pamper them; yes..spoil them!' What fun you can have together and what love you can feel for that person, like never before. We do not usually show our love in a continuous manner, sometimes rarely, or even never. Yet dementia can bring out all the love for that person in those precious moments you spend in his or her company. How beautiful this is!

Yes you will cry for that person in the end, if you have any tears left. However, those times you enjoyed during dementia will be your treasure forever. My mother loved to swim and when I would lead her into the water the giggle she would let out stays with me till today. She was happy in those moments and it did not matter that she forgot them as soon as we left the water..those moments were set in stone… and no one could ever take them away from mum and I.

Dementia brought my family so close together and we spent days on end talking about her, planning, discussing. We looked after my dad more carefully, and treasured him even more. He, on his part, never left her side, loved her like never before. As much as it was tragic, it was wonderful to see… and we will never forget that love.

CELEBRITIES WHO OVERCAME DISABILITY

What might outwardly appear tragedy can well be transformed into pro-active positivity. Never give up!

Tom **CRUISE:**

Diagnosed as dyslexic at the age of 7. He spent his childhood years trying his utmost to hide his condition from his peers. He graduated from High School barely able to read. When he got his first great acting role at 19, he realised that his inability to read would prove a hitch in the world of Hollywood which was his dream. So, he decided to work hard on his impairment since he refused to let dyslexia stand in the way of his journey towards becoming a film star.

Andrea **BOCELLI:**

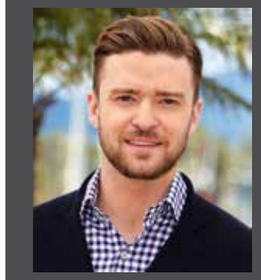
At his birth, it was evident that he had numerous sight problems and was eventually diagnosed with *congenital glaucoma*. He lost his sight completely at the age of 12 when he was accidentally hit in the eye while goalkeeping during a football match. He had started his piano lessons at 6 years of age. However, he became a self-taught flute, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, guitar and drums player later in his youth. Despite his sight impairment, he studied to gain his doctorate while performing in piano bars in the evenings to earn money for his studies. Wouldn't Andrea Bocelli's story confirm that *where there is a will, there is a way*!

Jody **CUNDY:**

Born with a deformed right foot that was later amputated when he was 3 years old, he was later fitted with a prosthetic leg which boosted his adrenaline in the road to athletic success. Over 10 years he won 23 international medals; 14 gold, 4 silver and 5 bronze. But he changed route in 2005 when he set out to a new world record in cycling to become the fastest solo Paralympian cyclist and has since won multiple medals on the world stage. Just over 7 years ago, Jody set up the cycling team *Para-T*. It is a team made up entirely of elite Paracycling athletes whose aim is to promote disability sport. Jody Cundy is one of a handful of athletes who have become Paralympic champions in 2 different sports.

Elton **JOHN:**

Born on 25 March 1947, he learned to play the piano at the age of 3 simply by listening to a recording of *The Skater's Waltz*. At the time when he was proclaimed the *Biggest Pop Star of the 70s*, he became heavily dependent on cocaine and alcohol and was also struggling with bulimia, which in turn further intensified his drug abuse. In 1975 he suffered a drug overdose which precipitated epileptic seizures which were so severe that he would turn blue from lack of oxygen. In 1986, Elton John underwent throat surgery while on a concert tour but recovered rather quickly; an experience which led him to spend the next few years focusing on his career and a determination to get clean. Within 4 years he was clean and sober acquiring a clarity of mind which prompted him to be a more rigorous donor to society. He launched the *Elton John AIDS Foundation* with the aim of creating an AIDS free future.



Justin **TIMBERLAKE:**

A popular American singer, songwriter and actor. Ten years ago Justin revealed that he has a mix of OCD and ADD during an interview with Collider, a website focusing on entertainment news. He said that his OCD manifests itself in his enduring need to have things lined up correctly. He is also obsessed with allowing only certain foods in his refrigerator. He admits that it is not easy for him to live with his conditions, yet he struggles to overcome all obstacles to his incredibly successful career. He is the winner of 9 Grammy Awards and 4 Emmy Awards.

Whoopi **GOLDBERG:**

An Oscar-winning actress who is one of the most recognizable African-American comedienne. In 2011, she admitted to premature hearing loss but did not let her condition slow her down in her achievements. She attributes this condition to long years of listening to loud music. She is unable to hear low tones and sounds and is thus bound to use hearing aids. Having struggled her way towards success, she is very concerned about the needs of others who may be struggling with impairments. Through her advocacy of the Starkey Hearing Foundation, she urges youngsters to avoid using headphones in order to save their ear drums and prevent premature hearing loss.

Lady **GAGA:**

A well-known, highly popular American singer, songwriter and actress. Having sold over 27 million albums and some 150 million singles, she is considered as one of the best-selling music artists in history. It was to everybody's surprise that Lady Gaga revealed that she suffers from fibromyalgia. Her tweet, *I wish to help raise awareness and connect people who have it*, was a bang on her fans. Her other tweet: *Brazil, I'm devastated that I'm not well enough, I'm too sick to come to Rock In Rio. I would do anything for you but I have to take care of my body*...shows the extent of her condition and how it effects her career at times. As well as widespread pain, people with fibromyalgia may also have increased senstivity to pain, fatigue and muscle stiffness.

Isabella **SPRINGMUHL TEJADA:**

"It was a *NO* that I wanted to turn into a big *YES*." Rather than give up her dreams of becoming a fashion designer, rejection prompted Isabella Springmuhl Tejada to take matters into her own hands. The talented creative young girl with Down Syndrome has since become the most recognized fashion designer in Guatemala. When Isabella Springmuhl Tejada graduated from high school, she knew exactly what she wanted to do. As a budding designer, who at six years of age had been making clothes for her dolls, she was keen to study fashion. However, her dreams of following in her grandmother's creative footsteps were dashed by the local university, who declined to accept her due to her condition. Undeterred, and with the support of her family, she began educating herself. And today, Isabella's collections have not only received acclaim in her native Guatemala, but on the international fashion stage too.

THE MALTA SOCIETY OF THE BLIND (MSB)

Since its inception, the Malta Society of the Blind (MSB) has sought to help blind and partially sighted individuals to achieve the targets and goals they choose in life. The President, Frans Tirchett a blind person himself, and the undersigned are making ourselves available more than ever to pay home visits to persons just diagnosed with blindness or visual impairment. MSB is there to help and advise on issues like how to apply for a disability pension, provision of emotional support, referral for rehabilitation services (e.g. buying of white canes, general talking gadgets including home aids), guidance regarding assisted technology, as well as organising functions and events to help its members to come together. It strives to give the blind/visually impaired persons a sense of empowerment and the possibility to live life in an independent fashion.

The next Annual General Meeting will be held in April 2019. The MSB members have just enjoyed a free all-inclusive Christmas/New Year buffet lunch at the db San Antonio Hotel on 10th January 2019.

Other involvements on the part of the Society include attending meetings with Government authorities to give advice on infrastructure so to be adaptable to blind/VI persons, on the organisation of a tactile exhibition, following up on members' claims, and any other issue in question.

We have ongoing discussions with CRPD and MFOPD in respect of suitable election voting modes for blind/VI persons, such as the concept of the service of a personal assistant (and not via the 7 sworn commissioners in the voting hall) and/or the use of simple electronic technology. It is proving very difficult to achieve a breakthrough with politicians. It appears that Malta needs to accede to Art 29 of UNCRPD convention before anything concrete can be done in this respect.

The MSB is a very active Society. The number of communications for advice, assistance or rehabilitation received weekly can sometimes be overwhelming. At times it is a matter of referring the caller to other entities. Frequently, the call requires more intense evaluation and then follow-up with advice and/or subsequent home visits.

Finally, the scope and all the energy of MSB goes to enable blind and visually impaired persons to have the same opportunities as all others, to unlock their full potential and at the same time, make society aware that being 'different' does not mean being less capable. Everyone can find his/her own niche where he or she can be a valuable member of society.

John C. Gafà

John L. Peel

The passing away of John L. Peel has been a great loss for the voluntary disability sector in Malta. His total dedication and love for the sector was conspicuous in every way.

John was an exemplary family man who dedicated his life to his wife Antoinette and his children. His son John and his wife Angela gave John the gift of 2 grandchildren, Stephanie Anne and John Mark. He dedicated his life to his daughter Christine, who was a person with disability, in the loving manner which is so congruent with a true Christian who lives his life of faith in blissful simplicity.

This hymn of love was extended to the disability sector wherein his dedication was limitless and encompassing a wide voluntary network. He was one of the veterans who worked incessantly in the sector, constantly putting aside his needs to be present for others who requested his attention. For 18 years he chaired the *Down Syndrome Association* and was its representative on the *Malta Federation of Organisations Persons with Disability*, also taking the role of the Federation's President for some years. John was also a committee member of the *National Organisation for Parents with Disability*, adding to his involvement in the *Royal British Legion* and the *Royal Air Force Association* (RAFA) wherein he helped families of ex-servicemen to achieve their legitimate rights. Dar tal-Providenza found a dedicated volunteer in him until just a few days before his final journey to eternal rest.

A special feature in John Peel's character was his practice of being present to one and all in silence and without drawing the limelight on himself. May the Almighty Lord grant him the joy of sharing His eternal glory.

Paul Mifsud

Born in 1934 and raised in Valletta, Paul Mifsud spent a great part of his life involved in the Catholic Action. He held the role of President of *Gioventù Cattolica* in Valletta, the Vice President of the Secretariat for Social Assistance and also the Co-Ordinator of the Commission for the Sick and Disabled Persons within the Catholic Action Movement.

For 60 years he produced and presented the programme '*Is-Siegħa tal-Morda*' which at the beginning was aired on the Rediffusion and later on, was aired on Radju Malta.

During the first visit of Pope John Paul II in Malta, he was put in charge of organising the activity in Rabat, where the sick and disabled could meet the Pope.

MFOPD will fondly remember Paul Mifsud as one of its founder members and an active dedicated promulgator of the rights of persons with disability. His enthusiastic participation in all activities and meetings of the Federation have left their imprint on the achievements reached throughout the years.

Paul was 84 years old when he died on the 30th of December 2018. He was married to Georgina née Xerri and had 3 children and 5 grandchildren. The funeral was held in Valletta on Thursday 3rd January 2019.

Sarah Caruana
General Secretary
Catholic Action - Malta

SOCIAL MEDIA

MFOPD and the Media

On 1 November 2018, the programme *Il-Ħsieb* on BKR Radio, 94.5FM and DAB+, featured a discussion with the President of the Malta Federation of Organisations Persons with Disability. The theme was *Id-Diżabilità hi għajn ta' taqtigħ il-qalb?* (Disability is a source of anxiety?)

The following quotations, mainly taken from the *United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disability* and including key notes from the President's Editorial article in the first issue of the magazine, introduced the discussion:

It is important that in the disability sector, we be one voice so we deliver one common message. If we don't all speak in one voice, we will be creating an internal division.

It is necessary that rules and laws be enacted so to grant persons with disability their fundamental rights

Persons with disability have the right to be esteemed in the same manner as everybody else in society. They are free to take their own free decisions.

Children with disability share the same rights with other children, and their voice is to be heard so that their position in society be improved.

There ought to be public campaigns regarding the awareness about disability. Thus society may recognise the role which persons with disability have within the social framework and their contribution at the different workplaces.

Everyone has a fundamental right to life, not less persons with disability.

Within the United Nations, all countries are in agreement that persons with disability share the same fundamental rights as everybody else, thus their mobility can never be impeded.

The importance of having one voice within the disability sector stems from the reality we live. We are concerned with persons who have their own wishes, needs and rights.

During the ensuing discussion, listeners were made aware of the diverse obstacles which may hinder persons with disability from leading an independent life. However, greater emphasis lay on the many issues which are being tackled by all stakeholders to turn these obstacles into challenges towards achievements. Mrs Marthese Mugliette, stressed the point of allowing persons with disability to showcase their abilities and acknowledging their importance in society as pro-active citizens.

Other points treated during the discussion were the role of the State in implementing the key points of the Convention; the role of the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability; the highly active role of the Malta Federation of Organisations Persons with Disability; and the importance of providing the service of Personal Assistants to persons with disability.

Having **one voice** sounding the rights of persons with disabilty, via the various Organisations focusing on the individual disabilities, will only lead to a stronger pressure group which will enhance the rights of citizens who can seriously boast of diverse though different abilites.

The Malta Federation of Organisations Persons with Disabilities is Malta's Civil Society Voice in the Disability Sector.

- If you are an NGO or Service Provider working in the field of persons with disability, we urge you to join the MFOPD and ensure that the disability sector in Malta has One, Strong, Representative Voice.
- If you are a person with disability, we urge you to make contact with us to discover our wealth of services, not only through MFOPD volunteers but also by means of our Organisation members who represent thousands of persons with disability and who offer numerous services and assistance which YOU might find useful.

Contact us now: MFOPD Hotline: 7707 5555

Malta Council for the VOLUNTARY SECTOR

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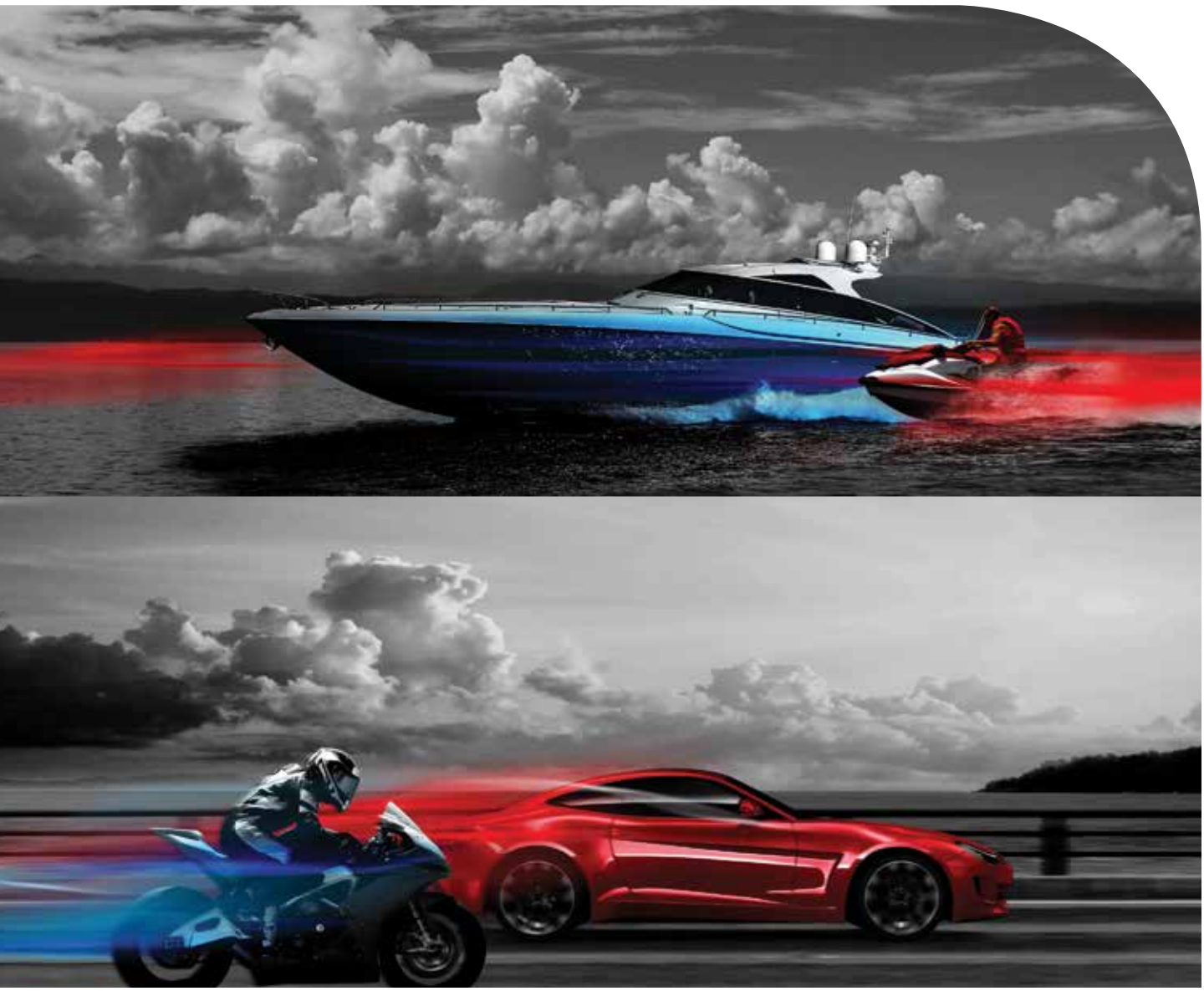

e POWER e DIESEL

Enemed is a key player on the island for the importation, storage and distribution of high quality petroleum products.

Our mission is "to develop, store and provide cleaner, safer, and superior quality fuels for the domestic, leisure, commercial, industry and the aviation sectors whilst striving to exceed customer expectations, increase shareholder value and create the best working environment for our team."

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