

One Voice



Official Voice of the National Federation for the disability sector

Issue 5 – March 2022

PREMIU SOĊJETA' ĠUSTA



Conference: Personal Assistance for persons with disability

11
April/2022
13:00

KEEP DATE AND
TIME FREE. MORE
INFORMATION
SOON ON WEBSITE
WWW.MFOPD.ORG

Organization:



Malta Federation
of Organizations
Persons with Disability

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.

One Voice

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We've started this year, 2022, still in a pandemic situation! The pandemic was underestimated. It affected the whole world. It affected some, more than others.

During the first months of 2021, our Government, through the Ministry for Research, Innovation and the Co-Ordination of Post-Covid-19 Strategy, started working on Malta's National Post Pandemic Strategy. A steering committee was set up and in May 2021, the Malta Federation of Organisations Persons with Disability (MFOPD) accepted the invitation to forward its post-covid strategy recommendations.

Here are some of the recommendations forwarded, including MFOPD's present remarks on them:

- A commitment to implement the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) - if this is taken seriously, and the sooner the better, persons with disability in the Maltese islands will enjoy a better respectful life.
- A quality education for all - it is a fact that many persons with disability are finishing their compulsory education not yet ready for work and for life outside the education system.
- All therapies needed by persons with disability should be considered as Essential Services thus, never to have a situation where persons with disability are deprived of these services as was the case during this pandemic - MFOPD hopes that this has already been rectified for the full benefit of all persons with disability.
- A professional evaluation of what is working, or not, with regards Supported Employment to persons with disability. Lots of funds, national

and EU funding, are being used with regards and Malta still lacks behind - as at today, MFOPD is not aware of such evaluation taking place notwithstanding that this suggestion was put forward way back to the authorities concerned.

- Ensure no one is left behind in the poverty net - persons with disability are at higher risks of being in or under the poverty line. This situation needs to be addressed seriously with the authorities concerned to get a good grasp of the situation and act accordingly.
- Mental wellbeing of persons with disability and their immediate families need to be professionally addressed all through the life span of the person with disability - the Covid pandemic brought about mental health problems for persons with disability and their families. MFOPD believes that when a family member is born with a condition and or disability, the family, and later on in his/her life the same person with disability, should be professionally supported and guided throughout his/her life according to the needs.

We cannot come out of the pandemic, hopefully very soon, without learning our lessons. We need to change what is not working; we need to start what is not there; we need to make better what is already working. We, all stakeholders, need to work together with the main aim for 'a full independent respectful life for all persons with disability'.

Ms Marthese Mugliette
President - MFOPD

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE AND STRONG VOLUNTARY SECTOR

FOR MALTA OF TODAY AND TOMORROW



Jesmond Saliba,
Commissioner for VOs

Malta has a vibrant and strong voluntary sector, which throughout recent years evolved and transitioned from one phase to another. This comprehensive evolution is evident and can be seen in the level of services that voluntary organisations provide to thousands of people within various niches. Furthermore, the scope of voluntarism in Malta has expanded to an extent that its roots can be found in almost all of the sectors.

Undoubtedly and rightfully, this sector and its representatives should be recognised as one of the major pillars that have forged the Maltese society as we know it today.

The Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations in the past months initiated a reformative process, both within the office with the aim to renew the voluntary sector in line with its contribution to society at large. The first building block in the reform within the voluntary sector was the redefinition and continuous renewal of the approach of the OCVO, so that it is in itself as a strong pediment that can lead to a national reform within the voluntary sector.

The OCOVO, through the VO Plus Convention, under the patronage of the President of Malta, His Excellency George Vella, embarked on a national consultative journey that together with all major stakeholders will not only see a new legislative framework, but will aim to build a sustainable voluntary sector. In the words of the President of Malta, the VO Plus reform, should be a means of helping the sector to grow, with a modern legal framework that reflects both current and future working practices.

Voluntary organisations offer a wide range of services that compliment assistances that are provided by both the private and the public sector, and this therefore makes the voluntary sector crucial in shaping the social aspect of the Maltese society. This being said, by undertaking the necessary actions, the voluntary sector should move away from its charitable and amateurism perception that sometimes overshadows it and start being perceived as a key player in the development of our country.

As I highlighted in my speech in Parliament in front of the Public Appointments Committee, this level of social responsibility that voluntary organisations assume, requires a certain level of professionalism both administratively and financially.

As a consequence of the vast array of services that voluntary organisations provide, the voluntary sector requires continuous guidance and assistance so that it can make the next leap in terms of how it is managed and administered. This can be achieved only if we understand the importance of the work carried out by voluntary organisations and move towards the belief that voluntarism is one of the pre-eminent principles that constitute the development of the Maltese society.

By reason of this, one has to point out the

national effort that is being made to conserve the sector and help voluntary organisations

The VO Plus Convention will help not just voluntary organisations, but also Malta, to understand and value how the sector is serving the country. Through research with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing, we will work on anticipating the needs of the country. We will also create a mechanism for the sector to be respected in the formulation of Malta of today and tomorrow look at activities which could jeopardise or disrupt the operations and credibility of the sector.

My vision for the Maltese voluntary sector is that while embracing the dynamic developments taking place within the sector, and the evolution it has passed through, together with my Office, I want to embark on a journey with voluntary organisations and adopt the National Strategy on Volunteering - Moving Towards 2025 and look beyond.

This strategy, if strengthened by changes in the law to cover the wide range of voluntary organisations that make up the broad community of Community Organisations and Civil Society, can truly recognise, support, protect and promote the unique value and contribution of voluntary organisations in Malta.

The above-mentioned strategy and changes can only be successful if we understand that this cannot be addressed by a 'one-size-fits-all' strategy. For instance, I believe that we must focus on the separate needs of voluntary organisations and be cognisant of the realities they are facing.

One of the most crucial points that my tenure as Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations will be built on is synergy. By having all stakeholders that make-up the voluntary sector together, it strengthens us to define and refine the way we serve, assist, operate, and regulate the sector. I believe that if we truly appreciate the vital importance of this sector, we must unite to help it grow and flourish while strengthening regulations to protect it from all forms of abuse whether from within or the outside.

Recognising voluntarism as a main pillar of the Maltese society is not enough. We must adopt a proactive approach and equip the voluntary sector sustainably so that it remains alive and fertile.



CIVIL SOCIETY COMMITTEE

within the MCESD



Ben Rizzo, Chairman CSC

The Civil Society Committee (CSC) has been in existence since 2012 when a law was passed in Parliament, accepted by both sides of Parliament, to give civil society a place on this committee.

The committee is composed of 12 sectors representing all NGOs in Malta. Each sector elects a representative and an alternate. Then the 12 elected representatives elect between themselves a chairperson.

Each NGO registered with the VO commissioner can ask the MCESD to be registered with MCESD and it is between these NGOs that the selection process is undertaken.

The committee meets monthly and we set up the agenda of the topics that we would like to discuss. The topics chosen are lead by a sector and for such meetings experts in the field outside the sector are asked to give us their views on the topics chosen. A discussion follows on the reports received and then a position paper is issued by the CSC.

Every year these reports are collected and distributed within MCESD and all the NGOs that are registered with the MCESD.

This year around May 2021 these papers were published with the topics discussed being :

Pensions, Gender Pay Gap, Local Councils Visions on Centres for Consumers , Covid 19 impact,

Agriculture issues, New Work Practices , Poverty issues and Personal Assistance for Persons with Disability.

Every year the committee prepares points to be taken into consideration for the budget of the year and present them to the Ministry for Finance together with the other points given by the other partners of MCESD.

This year the committee has decided that some of these points will be given to various Ministries as these were deemed very important and we have had discussions with three different Ministries who have taken on our proposals and promised to integrate these proposals in their work either immediately or in the near future.

A case in point was a meeting that the CSC had asked to meet the Minister for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing, Hon Julia Farrugia Portelli, where the topic of Personal Assistance for the persons with disability was discussed. In fact, the person in charge of the section, Marthese Mugliette, President of MFOPD, explained to the Minister and her colleagues that what the CSC was asking for was different from what is being offered today and the Minister realised this difference and promised that talks will begin with the CSC and related NGOs in order to see how this topic could be properly addressed.

The CSC believes that this is the correct way forward in order to let the points on which we discuss are presented to the Minister in charge of the particular topic. These points are also presented during MCESD meetings depending on the subject being discussed.

The CSC is always looking to improve its status by offering tangible points to better the life of the Maltese persons.

Gozo Round Table

Conference

Keep date
and time free
to join us in
this event:



Friday 7th October
in the morning.
Articles 19, 24 & 27
of the UNCRPD



Organization:



Malta Federation
of Organizations
Persons with Disability



Accessibility of Websites & APPs



Stanley M. Debono, FITA

The World Wide Web was created to facilitate communication for everyone, whatever their hardware, software, language, location, or ability. When a website meets this goal, it is accessible to people with a diverse range of hearing, movement, sight, and cognitive ability. This requires that websites and Mobile APPs be designed according to published industry standards. However, many of these websites are currently developed with accessibility barriers that make them difficult or impossible for some of these users to use fully or at all.

“Every public entity needs to publish an Accessibility Statement stating the level of accessibility and what is being done to improve it.”

Common issues to avoid

The Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA) provides ICT Accessibility audit and certification services which evaluate the accessibility of websites and APPs. This information helps developers to fix accessibility problems they may have introduced. The four most common issues we come across in our audits are screen clutter, poor colour contrast, poor use of HTML Headings and failure to label images with meaningful descriptions.

What can persons with disability do?

Persons who encounter difficulties using websites and APPs of the public sector and believe the problem has to do with accessibility should try and resolve the matter by contacting the website or APP owner directly so that the matter is resolved. If no positive resolution is found within a reasonable timeframe, one may lodge a formal complaint with the Malta Communications Authority (MCA). You can do so by contacting the MCA on

21336840 or visiting <https://www.mca.org.mt/accessibilitycomplaint>.

In the case of websites and APPs belonging to private entities you should file a complaint with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability at <https://www.crpdp.org.mt/file-a-discrimination-complaint/> or by sending an email to helpdesk@crpd.org.mt or by calling on 22267600.

In some instances the issue may not be with the website or APP. It could be that the user needs to make better use of assistive ICT or requires proper training. In that case they can contact FITA for the necessary guidance and support.

What can companies and organisations do?

Service providers can contact the FITA in order to learn more about the accessibility standard applicable to their ICT product. FITA can provide them with accessibility audit services as well as specialised training for HR personnel and content managers. You can contact FITA on 25992048 or at info@fitamalta.eu

Implementing the UN CONVENTION IN MALTA

After having ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012, Malta was obliged to put into place necessary legal safeguards and roadmaps to ensure its implementation.

Challenges to Implementing the Convention

In 2016, Malta amended the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act, to include more content relating to the Convention, while also transforming the National Commission for Persons with Disability (KNPD) into the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD). This made the Commission a separate legal entity, with a view to aligning it with the requirements of Article 33(2) of the Convention.

However, it was necessary to ensure that all the rights

guaranteed by the Convention were exercisable by disabled persons and their families under Maltese law. While key rights were guaranteed under the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act, a two-fold need was felt.

First and foremost, the existing gaps in terms of rights coverage were to be addressed. Secondly, a clear distinction was to be made between the Government of Malta as implementing entity, and CRPD as the regulatory entity. In this respect, the decision was taken, following internal discussions and external consultations, to have 2 separate pieces of legislation.



by Dr Alistair de Gaetano,
Administrator - Directorate for
Disability Issues (DDI)

Key Changes Required

The first of these was to be the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) Act. As its title implies, this legislation was meant to ensure that the Convention be made part and parcel of Maltese law. Additionally, this legislation was meant to set up the structures necessary for the Government of Malta to be able to implement this Convention.

More specifically, a national focal point for policymaking, and a national coordination mechanism are mentioned under Article 33(1), while a civil society participation

vehicle is made reference to in Article 4(3).

The second was to be amendments to Malta's existing disability discrimination legislation, the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (EOA). This legislation, ground-breaking when first adopted, as the first Act of the new millennium by the Maltese Parliament, had stood the test of time, but needed an overhaul, despite several amendments since.

The legislation had been passed at a time when KNPD was both the Government's focal point and implementing entity, and also the regulator for the disability sector. This legislation had also been drafted and adopted prior to the UN Convention having been even finalised.

Therefore, the amendments in question separated any content related to substantive rights and implementation from this Act, and passed them to the UNCRPD Act. The role of the Commission in this Act now reflects that of a purely regulatory entity, while the rest of the Act makes reference to routes for obtaining justice in terms of the Convention, while strengthening the role of the Commission's Directorate for Investigations, Compliance and Enforcement.

Brief Synopsis – New and Updated Legislation

The rights now listed under the UNCRPD Act are linked to redress routes under the EOA, both the traditional route via the civil courts, as well as a new, simplified route

via a UNCRPD Redress Panel, for more routine, non-financial claims.

Additionally, the Commission's powers to investigate and undertake enforcement actions in respect of breaches of the Convention have been clarified and strengthened, moving away from the mindset that enforcement only has to do with the built environment, and also introducing the possibility of financial sanctions for non-compliance, and even prison time for obstructing officials of the Commission in the performance of their duties.

Furthermore, the Commission's Test of Reasonableness Board has now been restructured to be able to better deal with questions that do not deal with development planning, but with other rights listed under the Convention.

The UNCRPD Act, meanwhile, lists the rights contained in the Convention, and relevant definitions linked thereto, in its Schedules, while also reproducing content previously in the EOA that was linked to these rights, such as in the areas of education and employment. This way, it can be relied upon for interpretation purposes, while the content of the Convention Articles remains supreme.

In this respect, the Act also refers to the General Comments issued by the UN's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in its Schedules. This is the key interpretative guidance available as to interpretation of different Articles of the Convention, having been developed by international legal experts, following wide-ranging



consultations with disabled persons and their organisations around the globe.

UNCRPD Implementation Structures

Additionally, the UNCRPD Act formally sets up the Directorate for Disability Issues (DDI). This structure future-proofs implementation of disability policy in Malta for the years to come, by ensuring a permanent structure within the civil service.

Said structure houses a national focal point for development of policy and legislation necessary to ensure implementation of the Convention, and also a national coordination mechanism, bringing together representatives of different State entities and line Ministries to discuss cross-sectoral matters related to said implementation.

Furthermore, ENGAGE, a forum which involves disabled persons themselves and their representatives, as well as academia and regulatory bodies in this process, is also set up within the Directorate by the Act.

A Roadmap for Implementation

To ensure a proper roadmap for the implementation of the Convention and of this legislation, Malta also adopted, following a process of internal discussions and external consultations, 'Freedom to Live', Malta's 2021-2030 Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons. Organised into 13 broad Objectives, this document lays out specific Actions and Outputs, linked to timeframes, to guide successive governments in ensuring that the rights contained in the Convention are properly implemented and accessible by all disabled persons in Malta.

Different stakeholders are indicated for every Action, and the structures mentioned earlier will be employed to ensure proper execution of the Strategy, and monitoring thereof. Furthermore, a quarterly reporting system is being put in place for stakeholders indicated.

This document also links to Malta's obligations under the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and was published in Maltese and English, in both Standard and Easy Read versions.

The Way Forward

While disability rights do not merely depend on fancy papers, undertaking any initiative requires proper preparation, rules and structures. The laws and the Strategy are a means to an end – to ensure that Malta becomes a society that is inclusive and accepting of all, not least of disabled persons.

However, with a strong basis in place, that was discussed with the UN's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities already back in 2018, and with a Strategy that was lauded by key disability sector officials, such as the Director of the Division of Inclusive Social Development (DISD) within the UN's Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Malta is now on a strong footing going forward.

It is now up to each and every one of us to make the best possible use of these tools, to make this country one that we really want to live in.



PREMJU SOĊJETA' ĠUSTA



In December 2021, as part of the week dedicated to disability, the annual event Premju Soċjeta' Ġusta was held to celebrate the work, commitment and dedication of various individuals in the disability sector. It aims to recognise the achievements of individuals and organisations inclusive towards people with disabilities.

The Malta Federation of Organisations Persons with Disability (MFOPD) was awarded the Work on Strengthening the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Award. This award recognises an individual or non-governmental organisation whose contribution left an impact on the promotion of rights for persons with disability.

The year 2020 marked the 50th anniversary of MFOPD and no celebrations were, and could be held, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Same pandemic situation was dominant in 2021.

It was a relief to be able to physically attend the Premju Soċjeta' Ġusta event in December 2021. It was an honour for MFOPD to receive this award on this day. This was taken as the 'kick off' for MFOPD's 50th anniversary celebrations which are being organised throughout 2022.

Venera Micallef
MFOPD's Secretary



Trevor Fenech,
Sindku San Ġwann

INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Creating an inclusive society where different abilities are valued, should be one of the prime objectives any local council should have. We believe this wholeheartedly at the San Gwann Local Council. Our aim is at creating conditions which enable full and active participation of every member of society so that they can achieve their full potential.

The San Gwann local council has undertaken numerous works to ensure that our public gardens, open spaces and public streets be fully accessible for all. There is still much to be done, but we are fully committed to making our locality a better place for everyone. Our latest project was the San Gwann Christmas Story. This consisted of a number of installations where the nativity story was told. Accompanying this narrative were pictures illustrating

this story. These illustrations were painted by members of society with disabilities. The scope of this was to highlight the potential of these individuals, who despite their disabilities, can still contribute towards a better community. We would like to thank Ms Marthese Mugliette, who supported our event and also identified the persons who produced the paintings. Many thanks also to Hon Minister Julia Farrugia Portelli, Minister for Inclusion,

Social Wellbeing and Voluntary Organizations for being present for the official launch of the exhibition.

The San Gwann local council will continue to work for greater accessibility in our infrastructure, but will continue to promote and advocate better accessibility in other sectors like education, employment, transportation, housing and recreation.

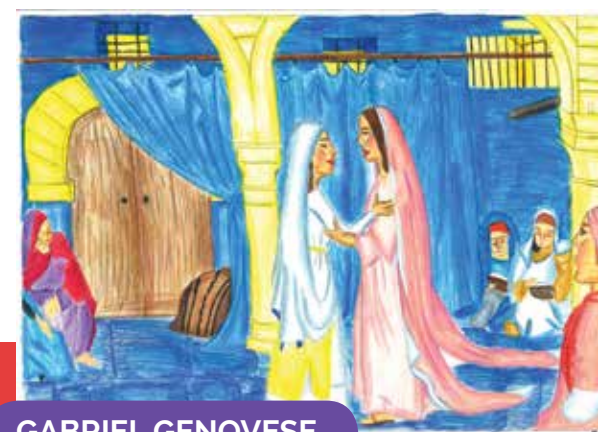
We strongly believe that a society working together can greatly improve the quality of life for all.



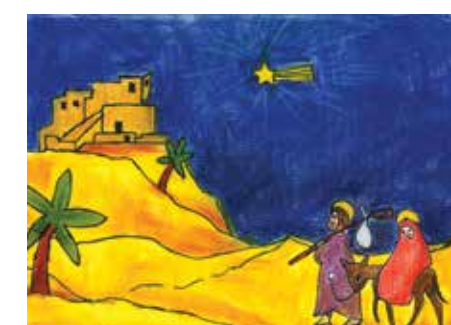
EMILIE MAGRI
member of the Equal Partners Foundation



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION MALTA



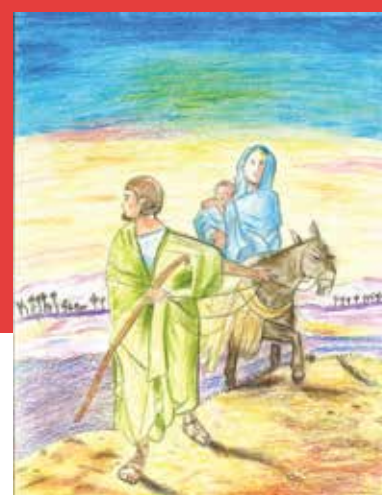
GABRIEL GENOVESE
San Ġwann Local Council



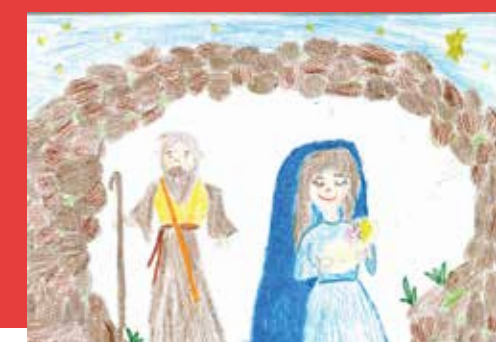
HANNAH MICALLEF
member of the Down Syndrome Association



JAKE VASSALLO
San Ġwann Local Council



SARAH GALEA
member of the Equal Partners Foundation



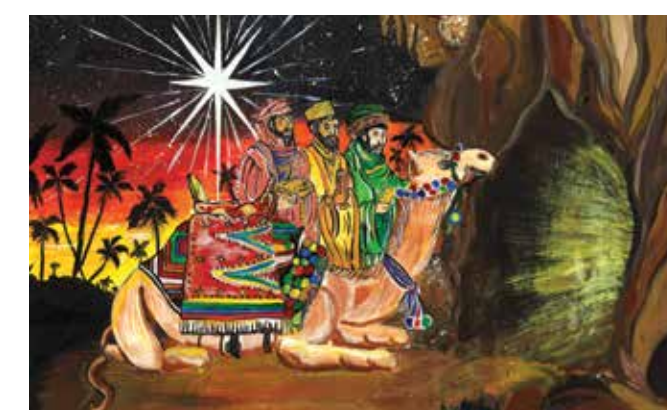
ELLA DEBONO
member of the Equal Partners Foundation



KAYDON FENECH
member of the Equal Partners Foundation



MAYA CARUANA
San Ġwann Local Council



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION MALTA

MFOPD'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION

As has happened to many, the pandemic ruined everything - our lives and all that we had worked hard for. MFOPD had to cancel all the activities it had been working on and which were planned for 2020, its 50th anniversary. These were put on hold to take place in 2021. Once again, these events had to be cancelled.

Such an anniversary was a must to commemorate and MFOPD found a way to do so with a publication as a momento. This thought brought with it questions and thoughts: where was MFOPD going to get the finances to cover the costs? What should one find in this post? Who was and could help MFOPD to have a special publication worthy of this commemoration?

The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, or rather the MCVS, was very helpful in enabling the MFOPD to issue

this publication. This publication was funded through the Small Initiative Support Scheme (SISS) with the same scheme guiding us what to find in this publication. This publication was to be the bridge between the fifty years of MFOPD's history and the present and the future, through its members stating what they want to see happen in the near future and through the articles. The Federation is of the opinion that this goal has been achieved.

The publication contains several articles on different topics, all



Venera Micallef
MFOPD's Secretary

of which are of interest to people with disabilities. This publication is in English. This is since, in addition to English being one of our official languages, this publication contains contributions from foreign persons and entities with which the MFOPD is a member.

This publication could happen because there were several people who, as soon as we asked them for an article for this publication, they immediately agreed to this. MFOPD is very grateful to all those who contributed to this publica-

tion. Their articles improved and made the publication of MFOPD's 50th anniversary very interesting.

Quoting our President's opening speech at the launching of this historical publication which was held on the 23rd February, 2022 at Antoine de Paule Hall, San Anton Palace, "Dear members of the MFOPD, you deserve a big thank you and congratulations as it is your membership that is keeping MFOPD alive and active.....I salute the past Presidents of the MFOPD, both those who have left this world and those who are still following the work of the Federation, and all, who directly or indirectly, have and still are contributing with the main aim for MFOPD to be the one voice of the people with disabilities in the Maltese islands and thus to improve their lives as quickly as possible".



MFOPD'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION



THE ACCESS CITY AWARD



The **ACCESS CITY AWARD** is a prize for Europe's most accessible cities. All EU cities with a population over 50 000 are eligible. This is a great opportunity for cities to showcase their initiatives to become barrier-free, and to be better places for everyone to work and live in.

The winner of the **2021 Access City Award** is the city of **Jönköping, in Sweden**. Jönköping made continuous improvements in both the new and old areas of the city, in collaboration with disability organisations. The city also created a local 'Access City Award', for businesses or organisations that worked with

their customers to improve accessibility. Out of **50 applications**, Jönköping was designated the winner of the 11th edition of the Access City Award at the online ceremony on 1 December.

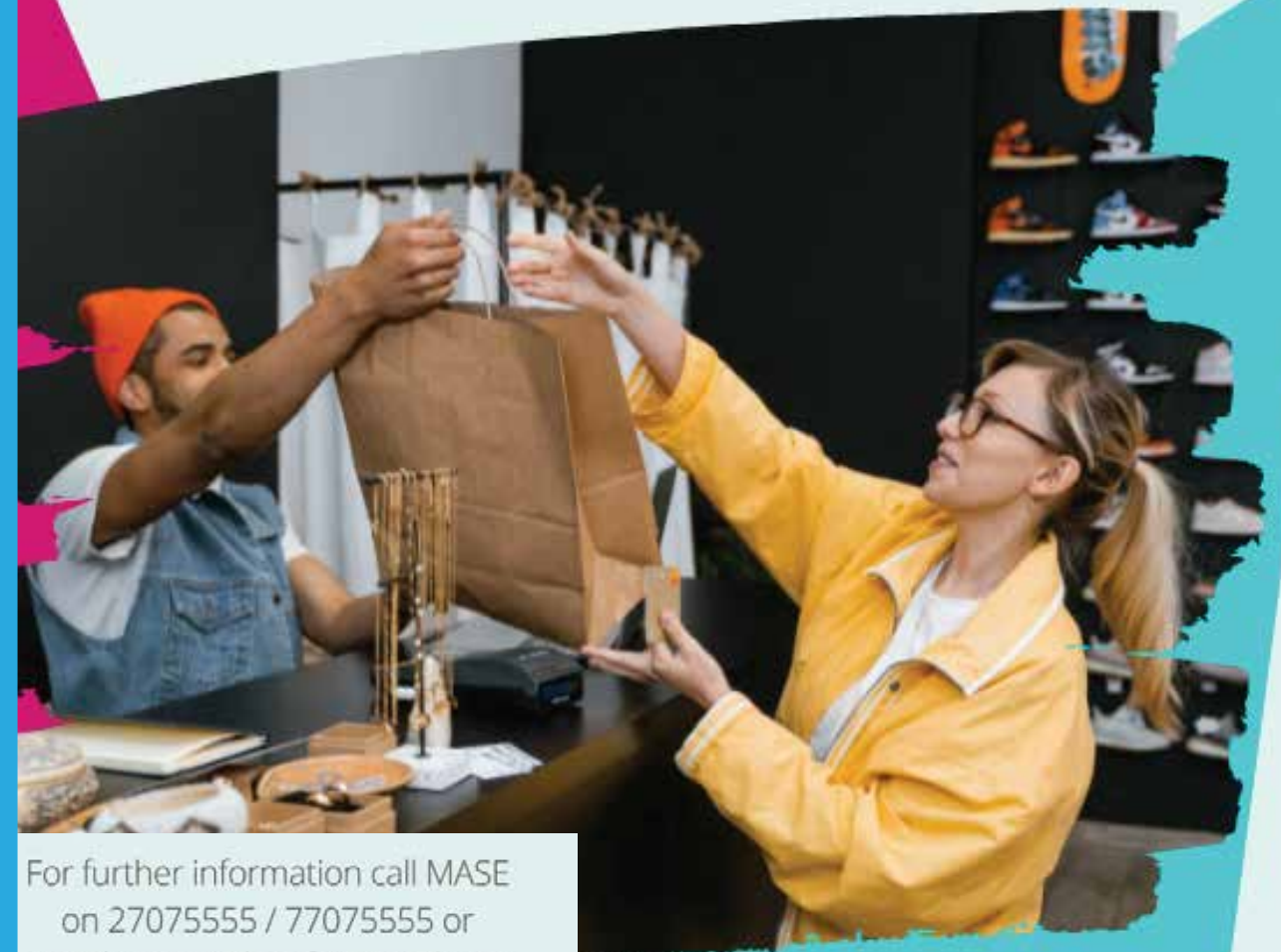
The city of **Bremerhaven** in Germany and the city of **Gdynia** in Poland are won second and third place for the 2021 Access City Award, respectively.

Poznań in Poland received a special mention for accessibility of public services in times of the pandemic. Two further special mentions were awarded to **Komotini** in Greece for "accessibility as an opportunity for the whole city" and **Florence** in Italy for the "built environment".

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&eventsId=1604>

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT BY MASE

MASE is offering its **free of charge** support to you : whether you have a disability / condition and or for any other valid reason due to which you are struggling to find a job.



For further information call MASE on 27075555 / 77075555 or email masemaltainfo@gmail.com



THE MALTA FEDERATION OF ORGANISATIONS PERSONS WITH DISABILITY (MFOPD) shows its solidarity with all the Ukrainian persons with disability.

THE MALTA FEDERATION OF ORGANISATIONS PERSONS WITH DISABILITY (MFOPD) shows its solidarity with all the Ukrainian persons with disability.

MFOPD is publishing the below information copied from <https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/russia-ukraine-crisis/russia-ukraine-war-millions-with-disability-abandoned-in-ukraine-charity-groups-fear-articleshow.html> as a sign of solidarity with our Ukrainian friends. MFOPD, a member of the European Disability Forum (EDF), fully supports EDF's Open letter to the Head of the European Institutions, European, Russian and Ukrainian Heads of State and NATO (24 February 2022)

-Russia-Ukraine War: Millions With Disability 'abandoned' In Ukraine, Charity Groups Fear

Charity organisations have warned that few people with disabilities have been able to reach the border and insisted that they are trying to help them

As the Russian offensive entered its 12th day, people continue to flee Ukraine for safety. However, millions of people with disabilities have been reportedly "abandoned" in Ukraine, *The Independent* reported. Charity organisations have warned that few people with disabilities have been able to reach the border and insisted that they are trying to help people with disabilities.

More than 1.5 million people have fled Ukraine since the start of the Russian invasion on 24 February, according to the latest data released by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). However, charity organisations fear that some of the people have been facing difficulties in leaving Ukraine and it includes disabled people. Aid workers have stressed that people with disabilities face difficulties in getting out as they do not get transportation and the organisations could not help to address their needs, as per *The Independent* report.

Some of the charity organisations have expressed concern for the adults and children with learning disabilities and emphasised that they could be "abandoned" at the residential homes and hospitals as the staff working there might have fled Ukraine.

2.7 million people with disabilities registered in Ukraine

According to European Disability Forum, there are 2.7 million people with disabilities registered in Ukraine. Anna Landre, from the US Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, which is supporting evacuations of people with disabilities from Ukraine, told the Independent that these people were being "left behind" as organisations could not address their needs. She added that the majority of Ukraine's disabled people were facing problems in evacuating or "cannot at all." Anna Landre pointed out that they were facing difficulties with transportation as people with disabilities have specific transportation needs.

EDF calls on lawmakers to ensure safety of people with disabilities

The European Disability Forum(EDF) has stated that their contacts in Ukraine have revealed that the situation of people with disabilities is "appalling." The European Disability Forum has called on lawmakers and all humanitarian workers to make sure that people with disabilities get access to humanitarian aid and are protected from violence, abuse and ill-treatment. Furthermore, disabled people receive information about assistance protocols, safety, evacuation procedures and support. Moreover, people with disabilities get basic facilities like water and sanitation, social support, education, healthcare, transport and information.

MFOPD is publishing the below information copied from <https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/ukraine-people-with-intellectual-disabilities-mustnt-be-abandoned/> as a sign of solidarity with our Ukrainian friends. MFOPD, a member of Inclusion Europe, fully endorses Inclusion Europe's support.

WAR ON UKRAINE: PROTECT PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES AND FAMILIES

Donations: Ukraine VGO Coalition have told us that the best way to help is to make a donation to help in this situation.

- Inclusion Europe have agreed that we will coordinate this.
- You can contribute your donation here. This post is updated as situation develops. "Millions with disabilities 'abandoned' in Ukraine", 6 March

Warnings people with disabilities are being 'left behind' as refugees flee conflict, writes The Independent.

- "There are 2.7 million people with disabilities in Ukraine, according to the European disability forum, while Inclusion Europe estimates there are around 261,00 people with intellectual disabilities."

Adam Zawisny, from our member PERSONI, says:

- There is a "frightening [...] black hole" in information on what to do in this situation.
- Thousands of children from children's homes had been evacuated to Poland over the last few days, partly because there were no staff in the institutions to care for them and due to dangers of being hit by shells.
- This isn't the case for adult residential and social care homes though: "It's hard to believe that the situation will be better than in the homes for children which were evacuated."

Obtaining medication, such as epilepsy pills, had become "impossible" and accessing bomb shelters

"incredibly difficult" for people with conditions such as autism who were left to "just stay in their homes hoping for the best," Milan Šveřepa says in the article.

- Inclusion Europe said in a statement that it had also received reports this week of "families with their children with disabilities [living] in the bathrooms or basements to protect themselves from bombs".

Russian forces take over psychiatric hospital in central Ukraine, governor says; Reuters

And the below link carries the following information:-

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/learning-disabilities-refugees-ukraine-invasion-b2029894.html>

Warnings people with disabilities are being 'left behind' as refugees flee conflict

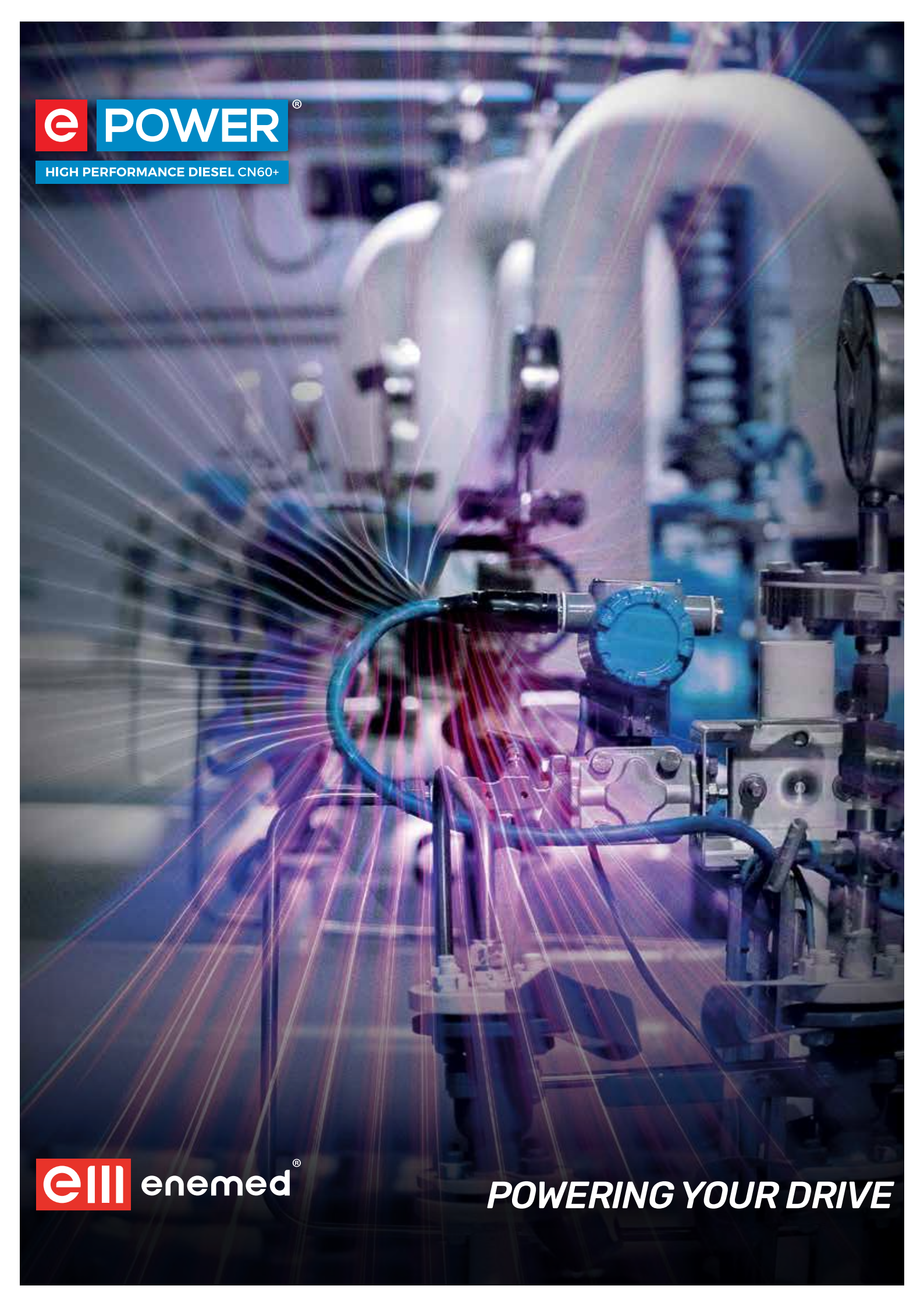
Millions of people with disabilities are feared to be "abandoned" in Ukraine as aid organisations warned that few are reaching the borders.

Charities trying to help people with disabilities, particularly those with learning disabilities, within Ukraine have told The Independent there has been a "frightening [...] black hole" of information about these groups.

More than a million Ukrainians have crossed the border to flee the country since the start of the Russian onslaught last week, but fears are mounting that some are struggling to get out, including many disabled people.

Aid workers have said there is a "lack of transportation" for those with disabilities, and that major organisations were not able to address their needs.

One disabilities rights organisation, the US Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, said it was currently supporting a 70-year-old woman in Lviv, but that they could not evacuate due to the lack of transport.



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