

ANED country report on equality of educational and training opportunities for young disabled people

Country: Malta

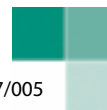
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The information contained in this report was compiled by the Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) in May 2010.

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the Thematic report on the implementation of EU Equality of educational and training opportunities in European countries with reference to equality for young disabled people.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation on equality of educational and training opportunities for young people, and in particular the National Strategic Reports of member states from a disability equality perspective in education and training, and provide the Commission with useful evidence in supporting disability policy mainstreaming.



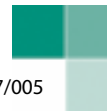
Section 1: Executive summary and conclusions

The development of an inclusive education policy and anti-discrimination legislation to protect the rights of disabled people in education and vocational training have been instrumental in increasing the presence of disabled people within mainstream education and increasing their access to vocational training. This particularly applies to young disabled people who, in the majority, are being given an education within the mainstream while being provided with proper support when required. Moreover, this level of support is also being extended to higher educational institutions as well as in the area of employment and training.

On the other hand, while disabled people are accessing better quality education, they still tend to have a lower educational level, less qualification and a lower literacy level than the rest of the population. Even if this trend is slowly changing for the better, it still indicates that there are aspects of our educational system that are not fully supporting disabled people in their future choices, especially those beyond compulsory schooling. In fact, this might be due to the lack of coordination between various service providers or benefit systems to help support disabled people's educational or training choices. This is because in order to achieve better opportunities, the factors that are crucial in supporting disabled people in the process of further education and training are sometimes overlooked. These factors include the provision of accessible transport, personal assistance and access to assistive technology.

While much is being done to make sure these elements are included within the educational provisions beyond compulsory education, there is much to be done to increase the participation of disabled people in further education and vocational training. Ranging from inaccessible training or facilities, lack of support in services associated with school (such as transport and personal support) and reluctance to provide reasonable accommodation, such as personal support, accessible transport in spite of the fact these factors are being addressed. In this sense, this report cites the Access to Professional Training as an example of good practice since it has attempted to coordinate the work of the National Commission Persons with Disability (Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni v'Dizabilita: KNPD) and two higher educational institutions in providing disabled people with support, both in terms of practical assistance but also in terms of assistive equipment and the provision of accessible transport.

However, one important lesson one learns from such a project is that it is not enough to have a good quality of education or training in order for disabled people to succeed with their aspirations but it is equally important to factor in the relationship between the person and the aspects of the environment that can be disabling in accessing centres of training and higher learning.



Section 2: Legal and policy context

The Maltese constitution (1964)¹ is the first legal document affirming the right of disabled people to equality in education and vocational training. It states that:

“Disabled persons and persons incapable of work are entitled to education and vocational training.” (Constitution of Malta Act 1964: Chapter II, 17 [3])

However, efforts to address the needs of disabled students started as early as 1951 when the first special schools were opened. Arguably, such education establishments were based on segregation but they represented an important milestone in the recognition of the educational rights of disabled people. On the other hand, the first attempts at integrating disabled people into mainstream education started in earnest with the introduction of the Education Act 1988 (Spiteri et al. 2005).

While the Education Act (1988) represented an important step forward towards mainstreaming, disabled people were accepted on condition that “[the] handicapped child could manage successfully in an ordinary school [...]” (1989 Circular to Head of Schools, cf. Spiteri et al. 2005). However, significant progress in inclusive education occurred following Malta’s signing of the Salamanca statement (UNESCO 1994), which resulted in the adoption of an inclusive education policy (1995), which increased the number of disabled people in mainstream compulsory education. At the time, only state schools were required to include disabled students (Spiteri et al. 2005).

A report submitted for the European Commission entitled “National summary sheets on education systems in Europe and ongoing reforms: Malta”² goes into further detail on the structure of the Maltese educational system and on the reforms that were taking place during 2010. Certain facts about the inclusion of disabled students emerge within this report that help to provide us with a better idea of the direction of inclusion and special education. Important examples include:

- While referring to children with “special needs”, a reference is made to children with “mixed ability”, which does not necessarily include disabled people but may also include people coming from disadvantaged family backgrounds.
- A reference to the reforms taking place already in special schools, changing them gradually to resource centres (discussed below). This report reveals that between 2007-8, there were just 0.55% of children attending special schools during compulsory school age (5-16). Moreover, unlike those who attended regular schooling, they also spent up to age 22 in such schools.

¹ <http://www.legal-malta.com/law/constitution.htm>

² http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/national_summary_sheets/047_MT_EN.pdf

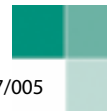
- (This represents a large improvement since the 2005 Census, when it was found that 4.1% (922) of the disabled population attended special schools. Also “9.8% (2,215) of disabled people reported having received no schooling at that time compared to 1.9% (5,886) of non-disabled people.”³)
- The fact that Malta is phasing out the practice of streaming that might have also militated against the inclusion of disabled people within mainstream education earlier.
- The reform to set up the Malta Qualification Council to establish accreditation of formal and non-formal education. KNPD has agreed with such a measure, arguing this could help improve the vocational and employment credentials of particular disabled people excluded from education.

This report is also a useful resource since it describes in some detail the entities running educational institutions in Malta and, by extension, the mainstream educational or vocational opportunities available to disabled people. These include:

- Compulsory education (5-16) provided by state schools or Church-run schools both provided free of charge and subsidised by government.
- Parents who send their disabled children to independent schools receive a government refund as they are saving on the cost of government having to pay for these children’s learning support assistance.
- Higher education institutions like the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), which offer vocational and technical opportunities; and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), providing training to students in hospitality and catering. These are also state subsidised and have offered opportunities to disabled people.
- The Junior College, a post-secondary state funded institution aimed at preparing students for higher qualifications and university level. Other post-secondary schools are also run by the church and private schools but they normally include a fee or payment.
- The University of Malta and a University Centre in Gozo offer university education in Malta and Gozo. Apart from university education being free in Malta, students at this level normally receive a stipend or maintenance grant to carry on with their studies.

However, while disabled people who make it to higher levels receive equal or higher stipends, support and transport needs might be more costly while disabled Gozo residents might have to face extra ferry trips which even if covered by the government can be more strenuous while the prospect of living in Malta during one’s studies might not also be possible.

³ <http://www.disability-europe.net/en/countries/mt/MT-2-factsEN.jsp>



However, the Right of disabled people to education was further recognised following the release of the National Minimum Curriculum (1999), which was the first document of its kind to include disabled people in mainstream educational provision, together with references to differences based on race and gender. Admittedly, the provisions to disabled policy in education only targeted disabled children during the period of compulsory schooling and parents have the ultimate choice on whether their child attends mainstream schooling or not⁴. Thus, state support and assistance was limited as it did not extend to higher education and provided limited training opportunities to those wanting to access the employment market.

The recognition of the rights of disabled people to education and training started changing with the adoption of the Equal Opportunities (Persons with a Disability) Act (2000)⁵, which made it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people on the basis of their disability, inter alia, in the areas of education and training (EOA 2000). The adoption of this Act was an important achievement as regards disabled people's rights as it set out to ensure that disabled people should not be discriminated against in the areas of employment, education, access to premises and provision of goods and services (including housing, transport and leisure facilities). Moreover, this Act refers to the principle of reasonable accommodation, which requires that parties involved are flexible to accommodate for the particular requirements or situations of disabled people.

Moreover, this Act provided the National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) with the legal framework to take action when there is a case of discrimination in education or training through the Equal Opportunities Compliance Unit (EOCU), which was set up for that purpose.

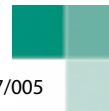
The Ministry of Education also drew up the National Inclusive Policy in 2000, which, inter alia, introduced the Individual Educational Programme (IEP) aimed at supporting disabled students within mainstream schools. This policy also proposed a strategy to achieve the goal of inclusion by providing disabled people with better quality education and learning support assistance to achieve this goal.

While this policy was partly successful in achieving its goals, in 2004 it was agreed that the policy needed reform as it was failing some students. This led to the setting up of a working group composed of members from the areas of education and disability. The main aim of this working group was to assess the effectiveness of the inclusive policy in achieving its objectives by analysing available data and through consultations with various stakeholders. The working group published its findings and proposed recommendations to improve on the implementation of the inclusion education policy in a report entitled, "The Inclusive and Special Education Review" (2005), known also as the "Spiteri Report"⁶.

⁴ <http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/malta/national-overview/special-needs-education-within-the-education-system>

⁵ http://docs.justice.gov.mt/lom/legislation/english/leg/vol_13/chapt413.pdf

⁶ <http://www.education.gov.mt/inclusion.htm>



In keeping with the Salamanca Statement⁷ of 1994, of which Malta is a signatory, one of the central recommendations proposed by the review concerned changing the role of special schools to resource centres⁸. Such centres would provide specialised services to disabled students attending the mainstream or other special schools at particular times or days. Such a proposal was incorporated within the revised Education Act (2006)⁹, which stated that:

"It shall be the duty of the State to provide resource centres, whose specialised role will include provision for children with individual educational needs who would benefit more from being in such centres than in mainstream schools, for such time as may be appropriate depending on their needs." (Act XIII [Education Act Amendment] 2006)

Apart from the redefined role of special schools, over the past years educational provisions have included the services of what was originally termed a "facilitator" (or, as it is now known, a Learning Support Assistant) who had the role of helping the disabled child integrate better within the class. However, following the publication of the Spiteri report, it was noted that facilitators tended to be unqualified and lacked adequate training and/or experience. Subsequently, people working with disabled children were obliged to have proper certification and training, which was provided by the Student Services Department (which falls under the Ministry of Education). The course provided prospective individuals supporting disabled children within an educational context the new title of "Learning Support Assistants" – and they were also provided with training by KNPD involving disabled speakers.

Inasmuch as the inclusive education system has, as a general rule, greatly improved the situation of disabled people in the mainstream, certain groups may still experience exclusion because of a lack of services. In particular, Deaf students lack the services of Maltese sign language interpreters, while there are also only a handful of Braille instructors to teach blind students (ANED, 2009) while children and young people with behavioural and emotional difficulties do not always have enough support.¹⁰ This notes the serious discrepancies in the qualifications of past facilitators coupled by the lack of more specialised training of others in dealing with disabled people who are blind, deaf or have intellectual or behavioural difficulties. However, the direction taken up by the report authors is to consolidate training and resources within mainstream schools rather than segregating students to improve on these groups' educational achievements - although some parents might note a preference for special education. These issues were recognised by the Spiteri report.

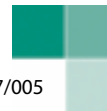
Additionally, the Equal Opportunities Act remains an important tool in ensuring that disabled people benefit from equality in education.

⁷ <http://www.um.edu.mt/about/services/support/access>

⁸ <http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/malta/national-overview/special-needs-education-within-the-education-system>

⁹ <http://www.education.gov.mt/ministry/doc/laws.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.disability-europe.net/en/countries/Malta>



This is evidenced by the increasing number of complaints registered by the Equal Opportunities Compliance Unit (EOCU) in the education sector; disabled people are becoming more aware of their educational rights. According to the EOCU Annual Report, of the 285 cases taken up by KNPD, 14.7% (38) were directly related to this sector. In addition, a significant number of cases reported in respect of access issues involved educational establishments. The education sector represents the third largest sector receiving complaints and includes private and church institutions as well as state schools.

Complaints in the education sector in 2009 related to:

- Lack of physical access to computer training centres
- Termination of a programme providing people with an intellectual impairment with the opportunity to continue with their education and to access training beyond compulsory schooling.
- A request for reasonable accommodation for a visually impaired student attending university.

While the complaints regarding computer training schools have not all been resolved, the latter two cases related to higher education and training have been resolved. It must be noted that KNPD has also cooperated with the Education Division in making schools accessible to disabled children through negotiation with parents and school authorities. Indeed, these cases are discussed internally within the KNPD's Test of Reasonableness board which comprises members representing disabled people, parents of disabled people and representatives of public and private enterprise in the area of access and court action is used as a last resort. Similar approaches are also taken in case of other issues, such as a case related to support staff refusing to provide medicine to disabled students who needed it in schools (KNPD, 2009a, p. 17-18).

Apart from taking action in cases of discrimination, KNPD has also worked closely with other entities providing education and training. These have included:

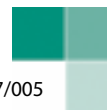
1. Post-secondary educational institutions, such as the Junior College and the Malta College of Art, Science and Technology (MCAST), which provide further education and training opportunities to those who have finished their compulsory education.
2. The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), the national agency responsible for providing those wishing to enter employment with vocational training and job experience.
3. Private entities providing education and training opportunities to the public.
4. The University of Malta, which provides tertiary education.

Moreover, the provisions for disabled students in education to help them go further after the compulsory schooling age (16) and in training have included:



- The introduction of special examination arrangements for disabled students from compulsory level to higher levels (adopted in 2002 and amended in 2007).
- The setting up of a supported employment section within the ETC and a scheme called Bridging the Gap that provides disabled people (and other disadvantaged groups) with training and support to secure employment.
- The setting up of a disabled support unit within the University of Malta to provide assistance and resources to disabled university students and staff.

The developments taking place in the area of education have helped redefine the position of disabled people within society. Indeed, young disabled people have higher expectations than previous generations. However, this does not mean that disabled people do not still face obstacles in furthering their education and to reap the benefits of their training in improving their employability and career choices.



Section 3: Evidence of outcomes and progress towards inclusion

The introduction of anti-discrimination legislation and an inclusive education policy were significant developments to help increase the inclusion of disabled people in society. However, while the inclusive educational policy has been fairly successful in including the majority of disabled children within compulsory education, disabled people may find problems in furthering their education or accessing training, which are essential to access employment. The inclusive education review (2005) made the following remarks regarding this fact:

"[...] The inclusive and special education process must not lead to an employment desert. It is not enough to stress that disabled persons should be recognised for their positive potential, rather than be rejected, frequently with blind prejudice. [...] The Group holds that there should be far more stringent enforcement of those provisions that seek to extend to students and other persons with a disability the opportunity to transit to the workplace, and to make their contribution to it through suitable gainful employment." (Spiteri et al. 2005, p. 86)

The results of National Census 2005 confirm that a higher rate of disabled people is going beyond secondary level when compared to the national average. However, there is a lower presence of disabled people at post-secondary and tertiary levels.

Table 1

Educational Level	10 - 19	20-29	30-39	National Average
	%	%	%	%
No schooling	-	-	4.4	2.4
Special school for persons with a disability	19.7	25.7	15.3	0.3
Pre-primary	-	-	0.3	0.4
Primary level	13.8	6.3	7.7	25.5
Secondary level	54.8	45.1	54.2	45.3
Post-secondary level	10.8	14.3	9.8	13.8
Non-tertiary level	0.9	1.9	2.8	2.7
Tertiary level	-	6.7	6.9	9.6
Total	100	100	100	100

(Data compiled from Bezzina et al. 2010, p. 11 and p. 86: specific data compared¹¹)

Table 1 illustrates the educational participation level achieved by disabled people ranging from the age ranges 10-19, 20-29 and 30-39 when compared to the national average for the Maltese population as a whole.

¹¹ http://www.knpd.org/pubs/pdf/census2005_knpd_2009.zip

Table 2 notes that the level of qualifications achieved by disabled people in the 20 - 39 age groups (or the first generation coming through the inclusive educational system), has almost reached the level of the national average. Conversely, one also notes that, even among 20 year olds, the majority of disabled people have no qualifications.

Table 2

Highest Qualifications Attained by Disabled People in Malta compared with non-disabled people	10-19 Disabled people	20-29 Disabled people	30-39 Disabled people	Average for whole population
	%	%	%	%
No qualifications attained	65.6	64.6	67.4	57.0
O level	23.8	13.1	9.7	15.4
Intermediate level	0.2	0.8	0.5	0.9
A level	6.6	6.2	3.5	6.8
Certificate or diploma not issued by university	3.8	8.6	12.0	10.4
University diploma	-	1.3	1.3	1.5
First degree	-	3.2	1.9	3.2
Professional qualification	-	0.4	0.8	1.3
Both a degree and a professional qualification	-	0.9	0.9	1.2
Post-graduate diploma or certificate	-	0.3	0.5	0.9
Masters	-	0.6	1.4	1.2
Doctorate (PhD/DBA)	-	-	0.1	0.3
Total	100	100	100	100

(Data compiled from Bezzina et al. 2010, p. 12 and p. 88: specific data compared ¹²)

Table 2 compares disabled people ranging from the age ranges 10 – 19, 20 – 29 and 30 – 39 (who never experienced any form of inclusion) with the national average.

It is also concerning that disabled people, including those between 10 and 39 exhibit high rates of illiteracy when compared with the non-disabled population. The average illiteracy rate in these age groups is of 23.5% - a high rate when compared to the rate of 6% in the non-disabled population.

Recent data collected by KNPD in 2007 to help in the drawing up of its National Disabled People Employment Policy (2010) revealed the following facts:

1. Less than 3% (290) of the students attending secondary schools were disabled people. The highest number of disabled people had an intellectual impairment (46%), a psychological impairment (18%), and unspecified impairments (16%) (Such 'unspecified' impairments usually include impairments like ADHD or dyslexia). On the other hand, people with multiple impairments (7%) and sensory impairments (2%) were the least represented (KNPD 2010, p. 16).

¹² http://www.knpd.org/pubs/pdf/census2005_knpd_2009.zip

2. Students attending special schools all had an intellectual impairment and some had also a physical or sensory impairment in addition to their intellectual impairment. Most of special school students were also male (KNPD 2010, p. 17). Due to the fact that not all schools or institutions submitted information, it was not possible to determine the number of disabled people attending special schools. However a report published by the EC (2010)¹³ indicates that the percent of disabled people in special schools is in the region of 0.55%.
3. The number of disabled people who were attending post-secondary and university levels totalled 128 students, which constituted just 0.9% of the general population of students at these levels (KNPD 2010, p. 18).
4. Disabled people attending specialised vocational training provided by the Eden Foundation (now the Inspire Foundation), an NGO which provides services to people with intellectual impairments, and the Richmond Foundation (another NGO providing services to mental health system users aged between 20 and 40 years of age) totalled 18 people with 16 males and 2 females. These services were provided with the assistance of the national employment training agency. However, it should be noted that since the majority of disabled people receive vocational training in the mainstream, the actual number of disabled people who receive such training is unknown as no statistics about this are kept (KNPD 2010, pp. 19-20).
5. The number of disabled people under 20 years old who benefited from the employment agency's Bridging the Gap and Work Start scheme (refer to ANED 2009)¹⁴ totalled 2 people, with an intellectual impairment and a physical impairment respectively. 13 individuals in the age range 21-41 benefited: 4 having an intellectual impairment, 7 a psychological impairment, 1 a multiple impairment and 1 an unspecified impairment (KNPD 2010, p. 23).
6. The fact that disabled people leave special schools at an average age of 22 (EC 2010), means that it is difficult to know what type of education have received.
7. The report also pointed out that some disabled people require the services of a job coach, a personal assistant and/or accessible transport services in order to continue working. In 2007, the national employment aid supported 31 people (between 20 to 41 years) through the provision of job coaching or personal assistance. The Eden Foundation supported 53 people in the same year. Finally, 19 people made use of the government-subsidised, accessible transport service provided by the Foundation for Respite Care Services (KNPD 2010, pp. 24-5).

In spite of the wide range of services that exist to support disabled people in education and further training (see below), the representation of disabled people in higher education and employment remains significantly low.

¹³ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurybase_en.php

¹⁴ <http://www.disability-europe.net/en/countries/Malta>

Indeed, better services to help disabled people transit from school to work or higher education were deemed two essential elements of the KNPD proposed employment strategy.

The reality for disabled people between 20 and 39 in 2005 might help get illustrate the employment situation of disabled people.

Table 3

Comparison of the labour status of disabled people in the age groups 10-19, 20-29 and 30-39 with the national average.

Disabled People's Labour status in Malta	10-19	20-29	30-39	Avg for whole population
	%	%	%	%
Perceived un/employed but not according to ILO (Inactive)	5.1	4.2	2.7	-
Employed	9.8	39.9	39.5	45.8
Unemployed	7.9	9.2	6.3	3.3
Student or trainee	58.8	6.3	0.3	7.1
Retired	-	-	-	15.8
Cannot work because of disability or illness	15.7	34.8	35.1	2.3
Taking care of house and/or family	0.8	4.4	14.9	23.3
Other status	1.9	1.2	1.2	2.4
Total	100	100	100	100

(Data compiled from Bezzina et al. 2010, p. 17 and 93 – some data compared)¹⁵

The data above clearly illustrates that while employment levels in the age range of 20 - 39 are comparable to those in the average of the general population, unemployment rates for disabled people are twice that or higher. Moreover, the rate of disabled people continuing with their studies is below average for 20 - 29 year olds, and plummets for those aged 30 - 39.

While illness or disability accounts for the highest proportion of younger disabled people not accessing employment, factors such as poor education, limited vocational opportunities and the limited coordination between services and their availability, may further impact the future prospects of disabled people who leave an inclusive school.

¹⁵ http://www.knpd.org/pubs/pdf/census2005_knpd_2009.zip



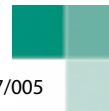
Section 4: Types of support for students and trainees

As stated earlier, disabled people receive the support of Learning Support Assistants (if required) during compulsory education. While this service is free-of-charge in state schools and schools run by the Catholic Church, parents who send their children to independent (fee-paying) schools are provided with financial benefits to help offset the costs incurred when employing the services of a Learning Support Assistant. This is indirectly saving on government expenditure. In addition to the services of a support assistant, all disabled students have, or should have, an Individual Education Programme (IEP) which sets out the targets and objectives of the student during his/her schooling. Apart from academic targets, the IEP aims to be a document to help identify the areas that need to be addressed for the holistic development of the student. Moreover, the IEP is expected to be revised to reflect the student's progress and changing situation.

Furthermore, the curriculum may be adapted in the case of disabled students who require this, as indicated in their Individual Educational Programme (IEP). In particular this is meant to improve the inclusion of students having an intellectual impairment or challenging behaviour.

In respect of access, both independent and state schools are expected to be accessible to disabled students following the adoption of the Equal Opportunities Act and the launch of the "Access for All" guidelines (2000) meant to help architects and developers design accessible buildings that comply with the provisions of the Act.

The above provisions are helping disabled people have access to a better standard of education. However, there are still problems posed to disabled students who wish to further their education, or those who wish to access suitable vocational training. On the other hand, there are a number of benefits and services that are assisting young disabled people in pursuing their goals. Although some of the services and benefits outlined in the next sections may not be specific to education, they can help in supporting young disabled people's access to education, training or work opportunities.

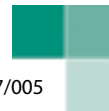


Section 4a: Financial support

- All Maltese students attending University and other post-secondary institutions are entitled to a stipend to cover expenses associated with their studies. This amount varies, depending on the course, and only applies for educational-related material, such as books, stationery and computers. However, disabled students are usually entitled to a higher stipend according to need and this may include financial assistance for provision of support and technical aids. The funds to cover university standards care provided by the government.
- KNPD offers disabled students wishing to pursue courses or training related to the disability field with modest financial support through its “Continuous Education Training and Research Programme” (PEKTUR).¹⁶ This programme is aimed especially at disabled students who wish to develop their knowledge and experience of disability issues and to contribute to the disability field in general.
- Transport costs to educational institutions (during the period of compulsory education) are subsidised by the state. However, due to high demand, it usually takes time to access this lower-cost service. Similar benefits exist for disabled people who pursue training with the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC).¹⁷

¹⁶ www.knpd.org/pubs/pdf/pektur_080221.pdf

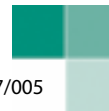
¹⁷ <http://www.etc.gov.mt/>



Section 4b: Personal assistance, equipment and adaptations

- Agenzija Support provides personal assistant services, according to individual need, to disabled people wherever required. However, there is also a high demand for such services, which are provided free by the state. In addition, during its work exposure scheme, the ETC may offer the services of a job coach or personal assistant during training and the initial phase of the work exposure scheme.
- The University of Malta offers support and assistance to disabled university students through its ACCESS Disability Support Unit (ADSU). Amongst the services offered is conversion of print material to electronic format or Braille as well as a range of other services and supports. For example, the University has introduced special examination arrangements to provide disabled students with the opportunity of taking exams while being provided with assistance that does not reduce the academic integrity of the qualification.
- Disabled university students who do not have their own motorised wheelchairs or speech synthesizers (as the case may be) can make use of such equipment, provided by the university itself, during the course of their studies. However, disabled people may also apply via KNPD's Assistive Apparatus Fund for financial assistance to purchase their own assistive equipment.
- Other post-secondary institutions, for instance the Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology (MCAST), have also adopted policies related to the inclusion of disabled people. This policy is being implemented through the restructuring of college areas previously inaccessible and the employment of trained support staff to work with disabled students.
- MCAST is also offering a programme aimed at developing the independent living skills of people with an intellectual impairment. The "Pathways Programme"¹⁸ is the only one currently offering people with intellectual impairment educational opportunities beyond compulsory school age. The Programme is partly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

¹⁸ http://www.mcast.edu.mt/support_pathwaycourse.asp



Section 5: Evidence of good practice

Access to Professional Training (APT) for disabled people¹⁹

In 2005, KNPD together with the University of Malta and the post-secondary institution MCAST, collaborated together for a Leonardo funded project called "Access to Professional Training" (APT). This project also involved two partner countries - Bulgaria and the UK.

The training course was aimed at facilitating the access of disabled people and other disadvantaged groups to opportunities in higher learning and tertiary education. For this project, disabled persons were trained in the area of social work, social policy, youth studies and social care.

The project aimed at providing disabled people with:

- Encouragement and support to undertake university and third level courses in social work, social policy, youth studies and social care.
- A learning approach that would serve as a model of good practice and to extend this model for use within the university and other higher education institutions.

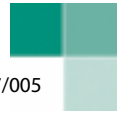
The project, based on a social model of disability, involved disabled people in the delivery of the course and each project participant was supported throughout by a mentor to assist them with dealing with problems and issues that might arise during the training period.

31 people participated, with all participants being disabled people, except for 2 who were socially disadvantaged. Disabled people had a range of impairments. The number of participants who completed the APT programme totalled 24. In a report following the completion of this training course, it was noted that a high number of disabled people who failed to complete the course had communication difficulties or came from younger age groups.

An important aim of this course is to encourage various groups experiencing social exclusion to work together and to open them up to the possibility of further learning. Since the conclusion of the APT course:

- 3 students applied for a University Course to start in 2007/08.
- 2 have applied for courses at MCAST
- 3 have an intention of applying for a University Course in the following year after having achieved other qualifications

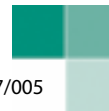
¹⁹ <http://www.apl-leonardo.org/?pid=8>



The rest of the participants reported a positive experience with attending the APT course and they stated they were motivated to continue with their studies and training in the future. Another welcomed result by participants was that they had gained new friends and created new social networks thanks to the experience of attending the sessions held at the university.

Moreover, other participants also expressed an interest to pursue educational courses organised by other institutions and also in furthering their studies and improving on their qualifications.

The APT course is a good example of how various institutions and European countries can work together to achieve a common goal. Moreover, because the course used a study model based on internet learning, it also demonstrated how new technology could be used to enhance the learning process. The provision of mentors as support for disabled people and other participants (especially those with no experience of higher education) assisted them in developing and sustaining the required skills to complete the training course.



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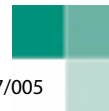
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