

ANNUAL REPORT – 2002

National Commission Persons with Disability

The National Commission Persons with Disability commits itself to render Maltese society inclusive so that persons with disability reach their plenitude as persons who enjoy high quality of life by means of equal opportunities in all sections of society. In order to implement this commitment, the Commission engages itself so that society eliminates all form of direct or indirect discrimination against persons with disability or their families while providing them with the necessary help and support.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Setting up of the Commission

The National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) was set up for the first time on 3rd November 1987 when the then Minister for Social Policy made a parliamentary statement and appointed the first members of this Commission. On 10th February 2000 the Commission was officially constituted according to Act No.1 of the year 2000, the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act. This same law enacted the aims of the Commission.

2. Aims

The aims of the Commission are to:

- identify, establish and update all national policies directly or indirectly related to disability issues;
- identify the needs of persons with disabilities, their families and voluntary bodies working in the field of disability issues and to take all necessary steps or propose appropriate measures in order to cater for such needs as much as possible;
- ensure that all Government programmes concerning the affairs and interests of persons with disabilities, their families and voluntary bodies working in the field of disability issues, are implemented in accordance with national policies for disability issues;
- ensure the necessary co-ordination between all Government departments and agencies in implementing measures, services or initiatives proposed by Government or proposed by the Commission from time to time;

- keep direct and continuous contact with local and foreign bodies working in the field of disability issues, and with other groups, agencies or individuals according as the need arises;
- monitor the provision of services offered by Government or its agencies or by any other person or group of persons, where the clients of such services are persons with disability;
- work towards the elimination of discrimination against people with disability;
- carry out general investigation with a view to determining whether the provisions of this Act are being complied with;
- investigate such complaints as may be made to them of failure to comply with any provision of this Act in an individual case and, where it seems appropriate, conciliate in relation to such complaints;
- inquire into, and make determinations on, matters referred to it by the Minister;
- provide, where and as appropriate, assistance, including legal and financial assistance, to persons with disabilities in enforcing their rights under this Act;
- keep under review the working of this Act and, when deemed fit by the Commission or so required by the Minister, draw up and submit to the Minister proposals for amendments to same;
- examine enactments, and (when requested to do so by the Minister) propose enactments, for the purpose of ascertaining whether the enactments or proposed enactments are or would be, inconsistent with or contrary to the objects of this Act, and to report to the Minister the results of any such examination;
- provide all such services that may be necessary or required for the Commission to attain its objectives;
- collate, analyse and publish statistics related to the disability sector which, inter alia, indicates the national level achieved in inclusive policy.

3. The Period of this Annual Report

This report covers the year 2002 and is being drawn up according to the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act, Article 30.

4. The Structure of the National Commission Persons with Disability

4.1 During this year, there were some changes among the members of the Commission mainly because this was reconstituted once again in October 2002. The composition of the Commission and these changes can be seen in this table:

Composition of the Commission 2002

	NAME	STATUS
1	Mr Joseph M Camilleri	Chairman
2	Mr Edgar Galea Curmi	Ministry for Social Policy
3	Ms Mary Rose Mifsud	Ministry of Education
4	Dr Marvic Sammut	Ministry of Health
5	Mr Alfred Camilleri	Ministry of Economic Services
6	Ms Claire Camilleri	Ministry for Gozo
7	Dr Anthony Charles*	Federation of Organisations for Persons with Disability (FOPD), Deputy Chairman
8	Mr Philip Grech*(1)	FOPD
	Ms Marthese Mugliett*(1)	FOPD
9	Ms Rita Borg*	FOPD
10	Ms Pam Muscat*	FOPD
11	Mr John Peel*	FOPD
12	Fr Charles Abela (2)	Archdiocese of Malta
	Fr Martin Micallef (2)	Archdiocese of Malta
13	Dr Marie Alexander	University of Malta
14	Ms Josette Pisani	Association of Local Councils
15	Mr Karl Borg*	
16	Mr Wenzu Dalli	
17	Mr Fred Bezzina	Secretary

* These people are persons with disability or parents of persons with intellectual disability, according to article 21 of the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act.

(1) Mr Philip Grech resigned and was replaced by Ms Marthese Mugliett from October 2002

(2) Fr Martin Micallef replaced Fr Charles Abela from October 2002.

4.2 The Commission also has an **Executive** which is made up of Mr Joe Camilleri, Chairman, Mr Fred Bezzina, Executive Director of the Secretariat, who also performs the function of Secretary of the Commission and of the Executive, Mr Edgar Galea Curmi, representing the Ministry for Social Policy, Ms Mary Rose Mifsud, representing the Ministry of Education, Fr Martin Micallef, representing the Archdiocese of Malta, and Dr Anthony Charles and Mr John Peel, representing the Federation of Organisations for Persons with Disability.

4.3 During this year, the Commission met 6 times, while the Executive met 4 other times.

4.4 The Commission continued to keep contact with the **President of Malta**, H.E. Profs Guido DeMarco, and with **the two sides of the House of Representatives** through the Hon Mario Galea for the Government side and the Hon Dr Karl Chircop for the

Opposition by sending them the minutes of the meetings of the Commission and other reports.

- 4.5 During this year, the Secretariat of the Commission published the **bi-monthly report** to the Ministry for Social Policy and to the members of the Commission. This report is placed on the webpage of the Commission.

5. The Secretariat of the Commission

- 5.1 The Commission was officially set up on 10th February 2000. On the anniversary of its official inauguration, the Commission presented its **Annual Report** for the year 2001. This took place during the press conference of 10th February 2002 in the presence of the Hon Dr Lawrence Gonzi, Deputy Prime Minister, and the Hon Marie Louise Coleiro, spokesperson of the Opposition in this field. This report was handed out to all those connected with this subject and could be obtained from the Commission in Maltese or in English, audio version, large print, or from the web site of the Commission.
- 5.2 At the moment there are fifteen people in the Secretariat of the Commission working full-time and two working part-time, seven of whom have a disability. The Secretariat offers equal opportunities of work in all levels, where all those employed do productive and efficient work.

During the year, there were these changes in the Secretariat:

- a) The Assistant Administrative Manager was changed;
 - b) The official responsible of the Section Equal Opportunities was promoted to the grade of Assistant Manager;
 - c) A part-time person was employed to work on computers.
- 5.3 During this year the discussions between the Commission, the Union Haddiema Maghqudin, the Ministry for Social Policy and the Ministry of Finance about the **collective agreement** were concluded.
- 5.4 The Commission bought the services of a number of **professionals** to be able to function more effectively. This included professional services about:
- (a) the Equal Opportunities Act;
 - (b) reports and home visits for the service of **Reserved Parking** (including the Review Panel);
 - (c) reports and home visits for the Social Aids Service;
 - (d) vetting by architects of applications for development made to the Planning Authority.
- 5.5 During summer the Secretariat employed two **university students**, one to work on the database of the Commission Resource Centre, and the other to help in the access audit of the University. Later in the year, two students from the Social Administration course did their work phase with the Commission.
- 5.6 As in former years, the Commission prepared the **Action and Financial Plan** for three years and presented it to the Ministry for Social Policy. Various meetings were held with

high officials of the Ministry in connection with the Plan, especially with regard to the budget for 2002. The result was that for 2003, which is also the European Year of Persons with Disability, the vote for the Commission was increased by Lm10,000.

- 5.7 The Commission continued working so as to bring its web site always up-to-date especially in connection with its activity and also to assure that this is completely accessible to all.
- 5.8 The Secretariat of the Commission continued to see to it that its **premises** were more accessible to all. Consequently: (a) the chairman now has his own office; (b) signs were put up to give clearer directions to the offices of the Commission; (c) a canopy was erected near the parking reserved for persons with disability.

6. Services of the Commission

6.1 The **services** given by the Commission to persons with disability are the following:

- The National Register of Persons with Disability;
- The Special Identity Card;
- Investigation of Complaints of Discrimination;
- The Special Aids Service;
- The Resource Centre;
- Courses on Disability Issues;
- The PEKTUR Programme.

6.2 The Commission makes **recommendations** to the departments concerned for these benefits:

- The vetting of applications for development to the Planning Authority;
- The exemption from custom duty on cars to the Ministry of Finance;
- The exemption from payment of road licences to the Department of Licences;
- The Blue Sticker to the Commissioner of Police;
- The Reserved Parking or Keep Clear in front of residences of persons with disability to the Public Transport Authority;
- The reduction on tariffs of the Websave from Datastream;
- Work Permits to the Personal Assistants to the Department of Citizenship.

6.3 During this year, the Commission started making **recommendations** about another service, that is the subsidy given on SMS and Voicemail to persons with sensorial impairment by GoMobile.

6.4 The Commission is asked to draft replies to **parliamentary questions** of its Ministry that are related with its activity or else related with the field of persons with disability. During this period the Commission presented 33 drafts of these replies.

6.5 Detailed reports of these services are given in this report in the respective sections.

Chapter 2

Plan of Action

1. The World Programme of Action in Connection with Persons with Disability

The Commission is now obliged to work according to what is stipulated in the **Law of Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability)**. Besides, as it has done in the past, the Commission continued to follow the recommendations and proposals the United Nations modelled and recommended to all Governments in the **World Programme of Action regarding Persons with Disability** issued in 1983. This report is formed on the same lines as this programme. At the end of 1993 the United Nations published also the **Standard Rules for Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disability**. This document complements and continues to develop this World Programme and consequently during this period the Commission also kept these Standard Rules as an important reference in the execution of its activity.

2. The National Register of Persons with Disability

2.1 During this period the Commission continued to work on the national survey that it initiated during 1992 by:

- (a) continuing to compile the information collected in the computers;
- (b) giving statistical information asked for by organizations or individuals.

2.2 The statistics about this Register for this period can be seen in this Table:

Table Number 2

STATISTICS ABOUT THE REGISTER		
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	2001	2002
* New persons with disability who answered the questionnaire	834	733
* Registered persons with disability who updated the questionnaire	421	134
* Questionnaires removed from the Register	-	1054
Total of persons with disability in the Register	7814	7493

2.3 During this period the Commission did a strong exercise to update this Register and remove those questionnaires which became obsolete primarily because of death.

2.4 The Commission receives various demands from different entities, like societies for persons with disability, Local Councils, Parish Priests, University students, etc. to make use of this information.

Because the Commission is strictly bound with confidentiality, it cannot divulge this information, but it decided to help all the same. The Commission asks those who use this service to provide the information they need so that this can be furnished by the Commission itself.

During this year the Commission provided this service to eleven entities or individuals.

Chapter 3

Rehabilitation

1. Representation on Various Boards

1.1 The Commission continued to participate in various boards connected with a number of **organizations** set up as its partners. During this period, the Commission was represented in the following organizations:

- Dar il-Wens – two members
- The Foundation for Respite Care Services – three members
- The Foundation Transport for Independent Living – two members
- The Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility – two members

1.2 The Commission is also represented on **Government boards**, as well as on non-Government boards, which include:

- The Civil Committee of the Maltese Council for Economic and Social Development
- The Ministerial Committee for Inclusive Education
- The Commission on Education for Hearing Impaired Students
- The Scholastic Councils of the San Miguel and Helen Keller Special Schools
- The Board of Appeal of the Moderating Statementing Panel
- The Malta Standard Authority
- The Clients' Forum of the Employment and Training Corporation
- The Task Force for Day Services
- The Board which runs the ATC in Ghajnsielem, Gozo
- The Consultative Committee of the Supported Living Section
- The Board which vets the applications of Scheme Seven of the Housing Authority
- The NGO Liaison Committee
- The Youth for Europe Committee.

2. Special Aids Service

2.1 During this period, the Special Aids Service helped financially and gave advice regarding help so that persons with disability could live a more independent life. The following are some statistics about this service:

Table Number 3

SPECIAL HELP SERVICE		
	2001	2002
* New Applications	223	291
* Accepted	197	269
* Did not qualify	11	9
* On the waiting list	91	137
* Dropped their application	15	10
* Pending	1	3
* Returned apparatus given to other applicants	13	8
* Returned apparatus	14	7
* Total sum of grants	Lm58,966	Lm57,539

2.2 During this year, the Commission negotiated a similar agreement to that of the HSBC with the **Bank of Valletta** regarding loans to persons with disability. These loans could be for anything that helps to improve the life of a person with disability. The two banks no longer ask for any recommendation from the Commission and only accept the Special Identity Card of the individual.

2.3 This service continued to work more closely with the **Community Chest Fund**. Persons who need to buy an apparatus which costs more than the maximum offered by this service (Lm500 in all cases except for computers, where the maximum is Lm250), are being advised to apply to the Community Chest Fund to be considered for further financial support by this organization. Very often these requests are accepted.

3. Refunds of VAT

3.1 The Commission continued to refund the VAT on these objects:

- (a) computers and computer accessories;
- (b) batteries for wheelchairs

3.2 The following are the statistics about this benefit during this period:

Table Number 4

REFUNDS OF VAT

	2001	2002
* Refund of the VAT tax	Lm3,966	Lm3,498
* Number of people who benefited	46	46

4. Child Development Advisory Unit

The Commission continued to work with the Department of Pediatrics at St Luke's Hospital for a comprehensive evaluation of the Child Development Advisory Unit (CDAU). During this year, the questionnaire sent to all those who make use of this Unit was completed and an analysis is being made of the replies.

Chapter 4.

Equal Opportunities

1. Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act

- 1.1 One of the main aims of the Commission is to ensure that the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act is observed. This law needs **regulations** in connection with Court Procedures for the smooth running of this law. The Commission made recommendations to the President of the Law Courts about these regulations which after many discussions seem not to have been accepted. The Commission will continue to work in this connection.
- 1.2.1 On the occasion of the second anniversary since the enactment of this law, the Commission published the **report of the second year** of its activity about this law. This report was presented to the public during a press conference in the presence of the Hon Dr Lawrence Gonzi, Minister for Social Policy, and the Hon Marie Louis Coleiro, chief spokesperson of the Opposition in this field.
- 1.2.2 During this year, the Commission continued to receive complaints about discrimination as seen in the following table:

Table Number 5

INVESTIGATION ABOUT COMPLAINTS OF DISCRIMINATION

*Complaints	Total received	Received 2002	Total Closed	Closed 2002	Open 2002
*Work	25	10	25	7	0
*Education	24	13	18	7	6
*Services	29	10	24	12	5
*Access	89	35	48	14	41
*Homes	3	2	2	2	1
*Insurance	2	0	2	0	0
TOTAL	172	70	119	42	53

1.2.3 From the number of closed cases, there were some which were successfully resolved by the Commission. These included:

a) General Agreement with the Bank of Valletta

The Commission reached general agreement of an assurance from the Bank of Valletta to execute this Law as far as reasonable possible. Among other things, this agreement includes that the Bank of Valletta:

- consults with the ETC about recruiting the right workers with disability as far as possible;
- endeavours so that within three years, 50% of its branches will be physically accessible to all, including the employees, while 90% will be accessible to the clients;
- endeavours so that within five years all the ATMs will be physically accessible;
- offers training in this field to its employees;
- offers a better service to its blind clients by not insisting that these be accompanied by others when they have to sign bank documents;
- offers loans with favourable interest to persons with disability in order to buy things which help them to live an independent life.

b) Law Courts Entrance

The Commission has reached an agreement for a ramp at the main entrance of this building according to the Commission Guidelines and that this work be done by the Commission with the Works Division paying for the expenses involved. The necessary work was done and now the Law Courts has become accessible to all.

c) St Helena Parish, B'Kara

The Commission received a complaint that the main entrance of the Parish Church of St Helena at B'Kara was not accessible to all. After the Commission's

intervention, the Basilica Chapter agreed to remedy the situation and now the entrance to this Church is accessible to all.

d) Shops selling to Persons with Disability

The Commission received a complaint that four shops which sell to persons with disability (like wheelchairs, etc.) were not accessible to persons with disability. After long discussions with Medicat and Technoline, these are now operating from places which are accessible to all.

e) The Roads Department and Psaila Street in B’Kara

After somewhat long exchanges with the Roads Department, now part of the Public Transport Authority, the Commission can report that Psaila Street in B’Kara has a high level of accessibility. This was also due to our interventions with Maltapost which had fixed a new letter box in a way which created an obstacle to persons who use a wheelchair. This road shows that other roads can be just as accessible.

f) Maltapost Letter Boxes

The Commission received a complaint that Maltapost was fixing letter boxes too high for people with disability. After discussions between the two sides, it was agreed that new letter boxes will be installed according to the Commission’s Guidelines, that is not higher than 120cm, while the others that can be modified will be seen to by Maltapost in a reasonable time.

g) Breakdown-Towing Service

The Commission received a complaint from the Deaf People’s Association because its members can only access this service by means of SMS. This Society asked the five companies to start providing this service to their members. The CAA Ltd and MET Companies readily agreed while the RMF and XTC Companies did the same during this year. The fifth company, the SBT, has not yet met our demand.

h) The Employment of Postman

The Commission received a complaint that a hard of hearing person was not engaged as a postman because according to Maltapost he could not hold a motorbike license. After the Commission intervened, Maltapost agreed to accept this person on condition that he has a motorbike license.

1.2.4 The Commission has three **court cases**, one started last year and the other two are for **arbitration**.

a) Peresso Company

The first court case with reference to this Law was made against Michele Peresso Company, a commercial outlet which sells special apparata for persons with disability (wheelchairs, etc.) from a building which is not accessible to persons with disability.

The Commission started this court case after failing to reach a solution following lengthy discussions. This company did not want to give a date when it was ready to stop discriminating against persons with disability according to this Law. This court case is still pending.

b) Invicta Ltd

This court case is against the Invicta Company which also sells special apparatus to persons with disability. When the case started to be heard, this Company began to operate from a building with an entrance accessible to all. We are trying to reach an agreement about this court case.

c) Towing Service – SBT

The Deaf People's Association complained that its members can only access this service by means of SMS. This Association asked the various companies to start providing this service. The SBT Company continued to refuse to provide this service in a reasonable way so that the Commission had to resort to the Court. The case is still pending.

d) St James Cavalier

The Commission received a complaint that the stage of this round theatre was not accessible to all. It was agreed that this case should be brought before the Centre for Arbitration. This awarded in favour of the Commission and ordered that changes should be made within six months. The Ministry for the Environment paid all the expenses involved. The Commission will see to it that the stage will become accessible to all within the stipulated time.

e) The Ministry for the Environment and the Interior

The Commission received a complaint that the main entrance of the Ministry for the Environment and the Interior, responsible for the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, was not accessible to all. It was agreed that this case should go before the Centre for Arbitration which has started hearing the case.

1.2.5 The Commission has various other important cases which are still pending. These include:

- The University of Malta in connection with Student House which is not accessible to all;
- The Public Transport Authority in connection with Hompesch, Burmarrad, Mdina Roads and others;
- The Mosta Parish in connection with the parish church;
- The Public Broadcasting Services in connection with accessibility to its building;
- The Les Lapins Hotel in connection with its main entrance;
- The Health Division in connection with the Gzira Health Centre;

- The Education Division in connection with facilitators in the Independent Schools;
- The MEPA in connection with tariffs for homes for persons with disability.

1.3 Other Laws and policies

The Commission is responsible to see that new laws and policies take into consideration the particular needs of persons with disability and their families and that they conform to the Equal Opportunities Act. Consequently during this period, the Commission studied these laws and policies:

- the Law about Conditions of Work and Industrial Relations;
- the National Strategy about Youths;
- the Regulations about Day Centres;
- the Standards about lifts.

1.4 Budget for the Year 2003

As before, the Commission issued a statement with its financial demands which it asked to be included in the budget for 2003. When the budget was announced, the Commission took notice of the fact that:

- a) its demand for an increase in the vote for the Section Supported Living was met and it went up from Lm85,000 to Lm255,000;
- b) its demand for an increase in the vote for Day Services was also met and there was an increase of more than Lm300,000;
- c) in the opinion of the Commission, its demand that the ETC will have the necessary funds to start a scheme of Permanent Assistance for the Employment of Persons with Disability was met;
- d) the Commission's demand for an increase in its vote in order to expand the Special Aids Service was not met;
- e) there was no response to the demand for a scheme to exempt the installation of lifts from VAT, so that the Commission will continue to work on this proposal;
- f) the Commission vote was increased by Lm10,000;
- g) there was a vote of Lm100,000 for projects for this year in connection with the European Year of Persons with Disability.

2. The Special Identity Card

2.1.1 The Commission continued to issue the Special Identity Card (SID) to persons with disability. The statistics about this service during this period is as follows:

Table Number 6

SPECIAL IDENTITY CARD (SID)

	2001	2002
* New applications	657	760
* Accepted	605	745
* Refused	11	15
* Renewed	406	349
* Withdrawn	-	42
Total of persons with disability who hold the SID	5311	6014

3.1. 2 Persons who hold this Special Identity Card are entitled to various benefits, a list of which can be obtained from the Secretariat of the Commission or from the booklet Services and Benefits for Persons with Disability (pages 32 – 35) or else from the Commission’s web site.

Chapter 5

Access

1. The Principle of Physical Access to All

1. 1 During the year 2002, the Commission continued working so that the principles of Accessibility to All are put into practice. Its activity in this sector can be divided into three categories:

- a) the Equal Opportunities Act (which is being discussed in another part of this report);
- b) the vetting of applications for development on behalf of the Planning Authority;
- c) consultancy and other activities.

1. 2. 1 During this year, the Commission continued to vet applications for development made to the **Planning Authority** for buildings open to the public and which are of major use. The following Table shows the statistics about this service:

Table Number 7

VETTING APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT		
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	2001	2002
* Applications	475	466
* Recommended with conditions	210	223
* Nor recommended	236	229
* Pending	16	14

1. 2. 2 The Commission began to make inspections so that the Planning Authority issues the Clearance/Compliance Certificate to those applicants for water and electricity. During this year, the Commission worked in the following way in this connection:

Table Number 8

VETTING FOR THE CLEARANCE/COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATE		
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	2001	2002
* Applications	7	16
* Recommended with conditions	5	6
* Not recommended	1	9
* Pending	1	1

1. 2. 3 The Commission feels that the figures in the last Table are very preoccupying for two reasons:
 - a) the number of buildings that were vetted although bigger than last year is still very small especially when compared with the figures of new applications that are vetted by the Commission;
 - b) the number of applications that were not recommended is very high, which means that the developers are not following the Guidelines of the Commission.

1. 3 The Commission continued to invest in this sector by offering **professional training** abroad to two of its architects who work in this section. This training was held at Portsmouth University in the UK.

1. 4 The Commission continued to work closely with the **Malta Standards Authority** to assure that the principle of Accessibility for All is respected even by means of the standards set. For this aim the Commission is represented on the board of this Authority.

1. 5 The Commission also gave a **consultancy** to various entities to assure the principle of Accessibility to All. Among the entities we worked with for this purpose there were:
 - the University of Malta,
 - the Public Broadcasting Services,
 - the Mediterranean Conference Centre,
 - the Roads Department,
 - the Works Division,
 - the Department of the Elderly and Community Services.

2. The Blue Sticker Service

2. 1 The Commission continued also to make recommendations to the Commissioner of Police so that persons with disability have the Blue Sticker service. This benefit primarily entitles persons with a mobility impairment to park in public parking places reserved for them.

2. 2 During this period, the Commission worked in this field as seen in the following Table:

Table Number 9

BLUE STICKER

	2001	2002
* Applications	505	515
* Recommended with conditions	488	483
* Not recommended	17	32
* Number of persons who renewed the Blue Sticker	352	268

2. 3 The Commission continued working so that at the opportune time the Commission changes the Blue Sticker to make it similar to that of the **European Union**. In this way the Maltese Blue Sticker can be used in all the European countries, while the European Blue Sticker can be used in Malta.

3. The Reserved Parking Areas

3. 1 The Commission continued to make recommendations to the Public Transport Authority so that persons with severe disability of mobility have a Reserved Parking Area or Keep Clear in front of their house. The Reserved Parking Area is given to persons who are eligible for this benefit and who have a car registered on that house, while the Keep Clear (1.5 metres wide) is given to those who use a wheelchair but who do not have a car registered on their house.
3. 2 During this period, the recommendations of the Commission for this service can be seen in this Table:

Table Number 10

RESERVED PARKING/KEEP CLEAR

	2001	2002
* New applications	266	254
* Recommended for Reserved Parking	157	119
* Recommended for Keep Clear	20	16
* Not recommended	86	113
* Pending	3	6

3. 3 During this year, the **Review Panel** for this service started operating as recommended by the Ombudsman. This Review Panel is made up of a representative of the Local Councils Association as Chairman and representatives of the Commission, the Public Transport Authority and the Health Division as members.

3. 4 During this year, the Review Panel functioned in this way:

Table Number 11

REVIEW PANEL OF RESERVED PARKING

	2001	2002
* Applications examined	21	54
* First decision confirmed	13	23
* First decision changed	2	21
* Pending	6	0

4. Exemption from Registration Tax

4. 1 The Commission continued to make recommendations so that the Ministry of Finance exempts persons with disability (and in certain circumstances their families) from the registration tax and/or customs duty on the cars they need. The following Table shows statistics about this service:

Table Number 12

EXEMPTION FROM REGISTRATION TAX

	2001	2002
* New applications	162	124
* Recommended by the OHU	76	85
* Not recommended by the OHU	3	11
* Have not yet made use of the Exemption	54	9
* Applications which were dropped	9	9
* Pending applications	20	10

4. 2 During this year, the Commission continued with the procedure of referring the recommendation to the Ministry of Finance for its approval when the applicant produces proofs that he is going to buy a car. A number of applicants (9 applicants) were recommended by the Occupational Health Unit (OHU) but they have not yet produced this proof so that their applications are also pending. This system seems to be working because the number of this category has greatly diminished (last year there were 54).

5. Exemption from Payment of Road License

The Commission continued to make recommendations to the Ministry of Finance so that drivers with disability according to the Social Security (1987) Act or who have a modified vehicle because of their disability are exempted from paying the

Road License. The following Table shows statistics in connection with this service:

Table Number 13

EXEMPTION FROM PAYMENT OF ROAD LICENSE

	2001	2002
* New applications	156	116
* Recommended	88	83
* Not eligible	16	25
* Applications withdrawn	14	0
* Pending	37	8#

These are waiting for a medical report from the Occupational Health Unit of the Health Division.

6. Accessible Transport

6. 1 The Foundation for Transport for an Independent Living

6. 1. 1 At the end of 1994, the Foundation for Transport for an Independent Living was established by the Commission and the Independent Living Foundation. Also during this year, this Foundation continued to give an individualized transport service to persons with disability, primarily for the purposes of work and education.

6. 1. 2 The Commission again gave a **financial grant** of Lm10,000 to this Foundation to enable it to exercise its function and also seconded a person to run it full-time. This financial help by the Commission was granted after a recommendation by the NGO Liaison Committee of the Ministry for Social Policy.

7. Information Accessibility

7. 1 Relay Service for Textelefon Users

7. 1. 1 The National Commission continued to work with the SkyTel Ltd Company to provide the Relay service to those who have the Textelefon. The Commission does this by paying the telephone bills for the running of this service and also pays the SkyTel Company. In return the SkyTel Company provides the relay service 24 hours a day, seven days a week by means of its operators to those who have the textelefon. The telephone number of the Relay Service is **21493167**.

7. 1. 2 During this year, the Commission made a **study** about the use being made of this service especially in the light of new developments in technology primarily with the introduction of the SMS service. Besides, for several weeks this service was not working because of technical problems. The Commission will continue to follow this service so that the right decisions will be taken in the near future.

7. 2 Websave Service

During this year, the Secretariat continued to make recommendations to Maltacom so that persons with a very severe disability will start having the Websave to enable them to access the internet with less expense. The activity in the sector during the year was as follows:

Table Number 14

WEBSAVE		
	2001	2002
* Applications	28	18
* Recommended	20	12
* Not eligible	7	6
* Pending	1	0

7. 3 SMS/Voicemail Service

The Commission started making recommendations to the GoMobile Company so that persons with hearing or sight impairments will benefit a reduction on the SMS or Voicemail service under certain conditions. This came about after this company accepted the fact that these persons have greater expenses to access these two services because of their impairment. This is the way the Commission worked in this sector:

Table Number 15

SMS/VOICEMAIL SERVICE	
	2002
* Applications	102
* Recommended	86
* Not eligible	11
* Pending	0

Chapter 6

Education

1. The Ministerial Committee for Inclusive Education

1. 1 The Commission continued to do its part in this field especially by means of the Ministerial Committee for Inclusive Education which is made up of all those concerned so that it offers an important forum for discussion and for decision making. The Commission did this by means of its Chairman and the Director of the Commission who are both members. The Director of the Commission is also the Secretary of this committee.
1. 2 During this year, the most important issues discussed in this committee are:

1. 2. 1 The Statementing Moderating Panel and the Board of Appeal

This Committee continued to discuss the work of the Statementing Moderating Panel and the Board of Appeal appointed according to the new policy approved by this Committee. The Commission is represented by the Chairman on the Board of Appeal. The main aim of this policy and of these entities is that every student with disability will have an individual educational programme according to his individual needs.

1. 2. 2 The Examinations and Provisions of Equal Opportunities

The Commission noted with satisfaction that the Education Division published the document about this subject. This document was discussed and approved in this committee and now provides a good framework so that persons with disability will have equal opportunities in examinations.

1. 2. 3 The Giving of Medicine to Students with Disability who attend Regular Schools

The taskforce appointed by this Committee to discuss this issue prepared its report. After it was discussed, it was decided that before continuing with the discussion, it was necessary to ask legal advice from the office of the Attorney General. The discussion will continue depending on this advice.

1. 2. 4 The Role of the Facilitator

As reported last year, this Committee appointed a taskforce to discuss the job description of the facilitators who help students with disability in regular schools. This taskforce prepared its report which it presented to this Committee. Among other things, it recommended two categories of workers in this field:

- a) a facilitator to help in the education of students with disability;

- b) a teacher assistant to support the students with disability only in their personal needs.

So far this Committee discussed and approved only the first part of this report in connection with the role and job description of the facilitator. Consequently this report served as the basis of agreement reached between the Ministry of Education and the Union of those employees.

2. Services after the Age of 16 years

The Commission continued to show its preoccupation that students with disability, especially those with an intellectual impairment, as soon as they reach their sixteenth birthday and finish their education in regular schools have nowhere to go except in special schools. The Commission prepared a comprehensive document about this issue. This document is being discussed internally in preparation for discussions leading to its implementation.

3. The National Minimum Curriculum

The Commission continued to give its contribution in a number of focus groups set up with the purpose of implementing the National Minimum Curriculum. Representatives of the Commission are giving their contribution in these focus groups:

- Inclusive Education
- Secondary Education
- Technical Education
- Education and the Labour Market

4. Special Schools

The Commission, while believing in the inclusive system, also believes that this is to be done on a period of time. It also believes that special schools should change their role to serve as Resource Centres for special education. To help in this field, the Chairman and the Executive Director continued to serve as Presidents of the Scholastic Councils of San Miguel and Helen Keller special schools respectively.

5. Physical Access in Schools

The Commission continued to work with the new Tomorrow Schools Foundation to assure that government schools have better accessibility. This Foundation initiated a scheme for this purpose and voted half a million lira. The Commission reached an agreement with the Foundation to provide it with the services of its architect and to help identify the schools where there are students

with physical disability. The Commission will continue to work closely with this Foundation.

6. The University

6. 1 The Commission continued to keep very close contact with the University Authorities to assure that the Authorities and the university students are conscious of issues in connection with persons with disability. This contact was on a more direct level because Mr Joe Camilleri, Chairman of the KNPD, is also a member of the **University Senate**.
6. 2 The Commission also gave its contribution through its Chairman in the committee which examines requests by students with disability who ask for different measures during **examinations** so as to have equal opportunities. This activity has to be linked with the initiatives taken by the Education Division in connection with examinations run by it.
6. 3 The Commission also helped so that the University, even through the students who worked in summer, makes a comprehensive **access audit** of all its buildings. This audit is now ready and discussions are going to be held for steps to be taken for its implementation on an extended plan.

Chapter 7

Employment

1. The Employment and Training Corporation

1. 1 The Commission kept continuous contacts with the Employment and Training Corporation so that the latter will provide specialized services to persons with disability in both fields of vocational training and employment. These contacts could come about in a more direct way because Mr Alfred Bezzina, the Executive Director of KNPD, is also **director** of this Corporation.
- 1.2 The Commission held meetings with this Corporation to discuss new initiatives in this field. During some of these meetings, the Minister for Social Policy, the Hon. Dr Lawrence Gonzi, was also present. Agreement was reached for the introduction of a pilot project of a **support scheme** on a permanent basis so that persons with severe disability could enter the labour market and remain there.
1. 3 The Commission and the ETC are working together on a **research** about persons with disability and employment. This research has already started and hopefully should be concluded during the year 2003.
1. 4 The Commission continued to give its contribution in the drawing up of the **National Development Plan**, mainly in connection with the field of employment. The Commission is represented in a working group led by the Corporation which is working on this plan.
1. 5 The Commission continued to give its contribution in the project **Access to the Labour Market for Persons with Disability** of the European Union. This project is being run together with Swedish experts. A number of employees in this field in the ETC and of NGO's which have an agreement with the ETC undertook training in Sweden and Malta.

Chapter 8

Day Services

1. Task Force

The Commission continued to work for an improvement in the Day Service for adults with disability, mainly through the task force led by Mr Joe Ebejer, permanent secretary in the Ministry for Social Policy, whose aim is to prepare a plan for the development of these services. Through its Executive Director, the Commission is giving its contribution both in this task force as well as in the preparation of this plan.

2. Resource Centre in the Community

The Commission continued to work with those running these services for the continuous development of small Resource Centres in the community instead of big Day Centres for adults with disability. After the inauguration of the first of these centres in the Mtarfa community, another two small centres were started during this year, one in the Pembroke community and the other in the Bormla community. There was also a financial agreement so that the Eden Foundation too will start a similar small centre in Bulebel.

3. Training

3. 1 The Commission continued to assist in the organization and the performance of training given by the Employment and Training Corporation to **support workers** employed in these centres or who wish to work there.
3. 2 In conjunction with the running of these services, the Commission applied for 8 employees from these Centres to obtain work experience in Portugal through the **Leonardo** Programme of the European Union. This was a unique experience for these employees and, on their return, two meetings were organized where they shared their experiences with their colleagues.

Chapter 9

Residential Services

1. Supported Living Section

The Commission continued to give its full support to the Section within the Social Welfare Foundation which is responsible for the development of this field. The Commission gave this support by:

- a) working to increase its budget;
- b) being represented on the Advisory Board of this Section by the Executive Secretary. This Board was mainly responsible for drawing up the policies of this Section;
- c) continuing to give its support in the physical development of the Vajrita complex in Wied il-Ghajn, and the building of a small house in the Mtarfa community.

2. Legal Framework

The Commission continued discussing with representatives of the Ministry for Social Policy about the Bill regarding Guardianship. Its aim is to improve in a substantial way the procedures used so that persons who cannot administer their wealth and who cannot completely look after themselves will have legal protection about whoever provides them with the support they need

3. Personal Assistance Scheme

A small number of persons with disability are buying personal assistants services from people abroad. For this purpose these assistants need a work permit from the Citizenship Department. After an agreement reached between the Commission and this Department, the latter accepted to consider favourably applications of this type once they are recommended by the Commission. Consequently, the Commission started making these recommendations after its professional people visit the applicants in their home.

Chapter 10

Action in the Community

1. Social Work with Persons with Disability

The Commission continued to work with the Unit of Agenzija APPOGG which provides services of social work to persons with disability and their families.

This entailed the Commission to provide premises for this Unit to operate from the Social Work Centre in Santa Venera, and to offer administrative assistance.

2. Postage Subsidy to Voluntary Organizations

The Commission again allocated a sum of money from its funds to subsidise the postage used by voluntary organizations which work in the field of persons with disability. This subsidy is 50% of the total expense. During this period, the organizations which benefited from this service were:

- The Federation of Organizations for Persons with Disability;
- The Equal Partners Foundation;
- The Foundation for Respite Care Services;
- The Blind Persons Society;
- The National Society Parents of Persons with Disability;
- The Deaf People's Association;
- The Multiple Sclerosis Society;
- The Commission for the Sick and Persons with Disability of the Catholic Action Movement;
- The Muscular Dystrophy Group.

3. Work with Other Organizations

During this year, the Commission worked closely with a number of other organizations in order to reach its aims.

Among these we find:

- ADHD Support Group
- The Local Councils Association
- Dar tal-Providenza
- The Federation of Organizations for Persons with Disability
- Eden Foundation
- Equal Partners Foundation
- The Independent Living Foundation
- Development of Maltese Sign Language Foundation
- National Society Parents of Persons with Disability

- Deaf People's Association
- The Spina Bifida Association
- The Multiple Sclerosis Society
- Gozo Association for the Visually Impaired (GAVI)
- Caritas Group Persons with Epilepsy
- Newspapers
- Political Parties
- Mental Health Commission
- Commission for the Sick and Persons with Disability of the Catholic Action Movement
- Pastoral Commission for Persons with Disability
- Family Commission
- Carnival Commission
- Radio Stations
- Television Stations
- Cana Movement
- Richmond Foundation
- Union Haddiema Maghqudin

4. Ministerial Committee for NGO's

The Ministry for Social Policy has a committee for Non-Government Organizations. One of the main aims of this committee is to allocate funds that this Ministry has at its disposition to these organizations. This is an important activity in the field of persons with disability and their families and consequently the Executive Director of this Commission, Mr Alfred Bezzina, is a member of this committee.

Chapter 11

Training and Research

1. The Course on Disability Issues

1. 1 The Commission continued to give a series of lectures on issues connected with disability to various students and employees in order to broaden their knowledge about this field, especially from the social aspect. The following Table shows the work of the Commission in this respect:

Table Number 18

LECTURES ABOUT THE FIELDS OF DISABILITY		
Client	Course	No. of Students
• University of Malta		
# Faculty of Education	B. Ed.	110
	Facilitators	120
	B. Psy.	80
# Faculty of Medicine		80
# FEMA	Social Work	70
# Institute for Health Protection	Nurses, Communication and Occupational Therapists	80
# Gozo Centre	Facilitators	40
* Education Division	Pre-Primary	30
* Institute of Tourism Studies	Guides	15
* ETC	Child Care Workers	60
* HSBC	Various	240
* Police Academy	Reclutes	60
	Inspectors	10
* Department of Family Protection	Various	35
* Supported Living Section	Support Workers	35
* Organizations	Cathecists, Zebbug Parish	30
	Deaconate Group, Caritas	30
	Special Needs Group, Attard	25
TOTAL		1150

1. 2 The Commission asked to have this course given also to these faculties:

- a) Architecture;
- b) Medicine (during this year a two-hour seminar was held)
- c) Theology

2. PEKTUR

(Continuous Education, Training and Research Programme)

This programme started working during 1998 with the aim of offering financial support in continuous education, training and research in the field of disability. During this year, PEKTUR issued a **call for application** for training and research in the field of persons with disability. The programme received four applications and helped the following two:

- financial support for an occupational therapist to attend a course in ergonomics;
- financial support to ADHD Support Group for a foreign speaker to give a conference in Malta.

The Board of this programme is still discussing the other two applications.

3. The Speak Out (“Semma’ Lehnek”) Course

PEKTUR organized another SPEAK OUT (“Semma’ Lehnek”) course for activists with disability or family members of persons with disability, especially those who take part in the Disability Issues courses which are organized regularly by the Commission.

The Hon. Jesmond Mugliett presented certificates to those who were successful in this course in an activity organized for this purpose during Disability Week.

4. Research

- 4. 1 The Commission authorized a research about “The Financial Aspect of Disability”. Mr Gordon Cordina is co-ordinating this research which is expected to be concluded during the coming year.
- 4. 2 The Commission is working in conjunction with the ETC about a research in connection with persons with disability and work. It is planned that the result of this research will come out during the coming year.

4. 3 The Commission is working very closely with the National Office of Statistics in view of a research about the main concerns of assessing persons with disability. This research too is expected to be finalized during the year 2003.

Chapter 12

Information and Public Education

1. Resource Centre

During the year 2001, the Commission continued to work on its Resource Centre which is to be found in its offices in the Social Work Centre at Santa Venera. Everyone can make use of it during office hours, including Saturday morning.

Besides continuing to buy books, magazines and videos, during this year we did a complete stock taking exercise of all the material we have available while we continued to develop the computer programme used for this service. The following Table shows the statistics about this Centre:

Table Number 17

RESOURCE CENTRE			
	Lent	New	Total
* Books	615	199	3158
* Periodicals	124	139	24*
* Videos	33	31	507
* Audio Cassettes	5	12	86
* Educational Help	218	0	218
* CD's	5	9	10
Persons using the Centre during this period		172	
Persons registered with the Centre		886	

2. Commission Publications

During this year the Commission issued these publications:

- **Equal Opportunities Act – Second Year:** a booklet about the main cases brought before the Commission because of discrimination against persons with disability in the second year since this Act came into effect. This booklet can also be found on audio, large print and from the Commission's web site.
- **Commission's Annual Report for the Year 2001:** this report can be obtained in English, large print, on audio or from the Commission's web site.

3. “Indaqs”

During this period, the Commission continued to publish its newsletter “**Indaqs**”. It came out every six months, in May and November 2002, the latter on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disability. This booklet is distributed to all persons with disability who are registered with the Commission and to all those involved in this work.

The newsletter can also be obtained on audio, large print, on computer diskette or from the Commission’s web site.

4. European Year of Persons with Disability – 2003

4. 1 The European Union declared the year 2003 as the European Year of Persons with Disability. The Ministry for Social Policy appointed a **Central Committee** to be responsible for this purpose. This is made up of two representatives of the Commission, that is, Mr Alfred Bezzina to act as Chairman of this Committee and Mr Charles Borg, as well as two representatives of the Federation who are Ms Rita Borg and Mr Philip Grech. Mr Eugenio Galea is acting as Executive Secretary of this committee. During the first meeting, this committee decided to include the National Commission for Mental Health. The latter accepted the invitation and appointed Prof. Marie Therese Camilleri Podesta` and Ms Josephine Pell as members to the committee. Later during the year, Mr Philip Grech resigned from the committee and was replaced by Mr John Peel.
4. 2 The **aims** of this Committee are:
 - a) to make sure that this year will bring about a greater and more positive recognition of the issues of persons with disability and their families;
 - b) to make sure that various sections of the Maltese society will take initiatives towards equal opportunities for persons with disability and their families.
4. 3 This Central Committee established twenty **sub-committees** in different strata of the Maltese society with the aim of helping to reach these aims. Every sub-committee included at least one member of the Commission and another member of the Federation together with other members. The secretary of the Central Committee, Mr Eugenio Galea, acted as secretary of every sub-committee.

These sub-committees dealt with:

- Physical Access
- Access to Information
- Political Activity
- Philanthropic Activity
- Education

- Family
 - Gender Issues
 - Organizations Persons with Disability
 - Gozo
 - Culture
 - Local Councils
 - Media
 - Research
 - Health
 - Spirituality
 - Sports, Youth and Culture
 - Tourism
 - Work
 - University
 - Intellectual Disability
4. 4 The Central Committee also set up a **consultative committee** made up of members of the Central Committee and the Chairpersons of every sub-committee to assure co-ordination in all their activities.
4. 5 During this year the Central Committee held the following **activities**:
- a) organized a press conference to inaugurate this year;
 - b) published a pamphlet to invite all Maltese entities to organize activities in connection with this year;
 - c) organized a meeting with all the Mayors of Malta and Gozo.
4. 6 All the **administrative activity** of these committees is the responsibility of the secretariat of the Commission.

5. The Disability Week 2002

5. 1 The United Nations declared 3rd December as the **International Day** of Persons with Disability. As in previous years, the National Commission Persons with Disability, the Federation of Organizations of Persons with Disability, the Pastoral Commission for Persons with Disability, the Local Councils Association and, for the first time, the Commission for Mental Health got together to organize a week of activities. Their aim was to commemorate this important day and to create a greater public awareness of the issues connected with persons with disability and their families. For this year too this week was the official inauguration of the European Year of Persons with Disability – 2003.
5. 2 The **theme** chosen for this Week is FLIMKIENASLU (together we reach our goal), same as that of the European Year. This theme was reflected on an attractive poster circulated in Malta and Gozo and on six billboards set up throughout Malta. Publicity videos on this theme were recorded and distributed

to all the local television stations. These videos were shown free of charge during the Week.

5. 3 The Commission came out with two **messages** on the theme of this Week, one for children and the other for the general public. The one for children was circulated in all the schools of Malta and Gozo, both private and state schools. The one for the general public was presented to all the media during a press conference organized by the Commission on 3rd December 2002, the International Day of Persons with Disability.
5. 4 The Hon. Dr Lawrence Gonzi, Minister for Social Policy, delivered his **ministerial message** for this Day by introducing a person with disability to pass on his message to the Maltese public.

This year, this message was delivered, together with the Minister, by Mr Kevin Cutajar, a visually impaired University student.

5. 5 The following were the **principal activities** organized by the Commission for this Week:

5. 5. 1 *Solidarity Walk and Declaration*

This walk, organized on Saturday 30th November 2002, started by a variety programme in Misrah il-Helsien in Valletta and was concluded at the Palace of the President of Malta, H. E. Prof Guido DeMarco, who welcomed all those who participated in this activity. During this visit, the Chairman of the Commission presented 154 declarations signed by entities which promised to provide in a reasonable way equal opportunities to persons with disability and their families according to the Equal Opportunities Act and the Standard Rules of the United Nations. At the end of the meeting, the President of Malta too signed this declaration.

Various persons with disability, their families and friends and a good number of members of parliament took part in this walk.

The 154 entities which signed this Declaration were the following:

The President of Malta	1
The Archbishop of Malta	1
The Bishop of Gozo	1
Agencies	2
Authorities	7
Educational Entities/Schools	23
Government Entities	13
Government Entities for Persons with Disability	3
Non-Government Entities for Persons with Disability	14
Other Entities	9
Political Entities	4
Commissions	3
Parastatal Companies	6

Private Companies	20
Local Councils	12
Members of Parliament	12
Ministers	8
Parishes/Religious Entities	12
Unions	3
TOTAL	154

5. 5. 2 *Flimkienaslu... ma' PEKTUR*

The Commission organized a public meeting about the PEKTUR programme with the aim of giving an account of the work done so far by this programme and also to give information on how persons and other entities can benefit from this programme of research and training. This activity was addressed by many of those who benefited by this programme and also by the Hon. Jesmond Mugliett, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education. At the end of the meeting there was a presentation of certificates to the participants who completed the course SPEAK OUT (“SEMMA’ LEHNEK”).

5. 5. 3 *The Signing of Agreement with the Bank of Valletta*

The Commission and the Bank of Valletta formally signed an agreement in which the BOV accepted to work in offering equal opportunities to persons with disability, either those employed with them or their clients, according to the Equal Opportunities Act. This activity took place on Tuesday 3rd December 2002.

5. 5. 4 *An Activity of Thanksgiving*

The Commission organized a reception to thank all those who work in this field, many of them on a voluntary basis. This reception took place after the General Meeting of the Federation of Organizations for Persons with Disability on Tuesday 3rd December 2002 at the Coralia San Antonio Hotel where all the activities organized by the Commission for this Week took place.

6. 5. 5 *Flimkien... mal-Politici*

On Wednesday 4th December the Commission organized an activity for the politicians in the Maltese Parliament. The parliamentary members were addressed by Mr Bert Massie, Chairman of the UK Disability Rights Commission and Ms Marianne Debono, Manager of Equal Opportunities Section within the Commission. 15 members of parliament attended this activity together with a number of other guests.

During his Malta visit, Mr Massie had three other important meetings:

- A meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Dr Lawrence Gonzi, together with the Hon. Dr Antoine Mifsud Bonnici,

Parliamentary Secretary, and Mr Joseph Ebejer, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry for Social Policy;

- A meeting with the spokespersons of the Opposition in this field, the Hon. Dr Karl Chircop and the Hon. Marie Louise Coleiro;
- A meeting with high officials of the Commission including the Chairman, the Director and the Commission lawyer.

During these meetings concrete methods were discussed, among other matters, about the way the two Commissions could collaborate better for the good of persons with disability of the two countries.

5. 5. 6 National Conference Fliemkienaslu

The National Commission organized a National Conference with the theme FLIMKIENASLU on Thursday 5th December 2002. During this Conference chaired by Ms Marianne Debono six papers were read based on the Standard Rules of the United Nations. For the first time they were read by persons with disability or by a parent of a person with intellectual disability supported by professionals. The papers and the speakers were the following:

- **Awareness, Research and International Field** by Mr Michael Micallef, a person with a visual impairment (supported by Ms Anne-Marie Callus);
- **Health and Accessibility** by Ms Kate Richards, a person with mental health impairment (supported by Ms Grace Micallef);
- **Education and Training** by Mr Karl Borg, a person with a hearing impairment (supported by Mr Alfred Bezzina);
- **Work and Social Security** by Ms Connie Baker a person with a invisible impairment (supported by Mr Brian Gauci);
- **Family Life, Religion and Leisure** by Ms Jeanesse Abela, a person with a physical impairment (supported by Ms Natasha Cefai);
- **Law, Policies, Co-ordination and Organizations** by Ms Markita Mangiafico, a parent of a person with an intellectual impairment (supported by Mr Andrew Azzopardi).

There followed six workshops on the same themes. The seminar came to a close by interventions by the Hon. Marie Louise Coleiro, main spokesperson of the Opposition in this field and by the Hon. Dr Lawrence Gonzi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Social Policy.

The attendance for this conference was very encouraging.

5. 5. 7 Flimkienaslu... mal-Kunsill

The Commission organized a meeting for Mayors and Councillors responsible in this field to make them better aware of this sphere. This seminar was addressed by the Hon. Dr Charles Mangion, main spokesman of the Opposition for Local Councils. The Hon. Dr Austin Gatt, Minister responsible for Local

Councils, could not attend because of parliamentary commitments. The attendance of Local Councils was rather poor.

5. 5. 8 *Flimkienaslu... mal-Mexxejja*

On Saturday 7th December, the Commission organized a meeting with the leaders of the country so that persons with disability and their families could share their preoccupations with the Deputy Prime Minister the Hon. Dr Lawrence Gonzi and the Leader of the Opposition the Hon. Dr Alfred Sant. The Prime Minister could not attend this meeting as he was indisposed. There was a good attendance at this meeting but it could have been better.

5. 6 The Commission also gave its support to a number of **other activities** during this Week organized by other entities, among them:

- a) the seminar **Flimkien...fix-Xoghol** where the National Office of Statistics published a research about this subject;
- b) a Mass at St John's Co-cathedral which was broadcast on PBS. During this Mass the Vicar General, Mgr. Annetto Depasquale, signed the declaration in favour of equal opportunities for persons with disability and their families;
- c) the publication of the Codes of Ethics for the media by the Broadcasting Authority;
- d) the conclusion of a training course for the HSBC employees.

Chapter 13

International Activity

1. The European Union

The Commission continued to work to strengthen its relations with the structures of the European Union (EU), especially now that the Secretariat has a high official responsible in this field. This activity included:

- a) participating in a number of meetings related with the EU which took place abroad;
- b) applying so that the Commission becomes an observing member of the European Disability Forum. The application was accepted.
- c) applying so that a number of support workers follow vocational training in Portugal by means of the Leonardo programme. This application too was accepted.

2. International Meetings

2. 1 The Commission believes that it is very important to keep abreast with what is happening abroad. Therefore it is of utmost importance for the officials of the Commission to participate in international meetings whenever possible and within the limits of its resources. During this year, officials of the Commission took part in the following international meetings:

2. 1. 1 *Conference about the EQUAL Programme*

The Ministry for Social Policy invited representatives of the Commission to form part of the Maltese delegation attending a conference about the EQUAL Programme of the European Union organized by the Danish Presidency for the applicant countries.

The Commission accepted this invitation and the Executive Director of the Commission, Mr Alfred Bezzina, attended this seminar which was held in Copenhagen in Denmark. The Commission believes that this programme can be of great help for the Commission to fulfill its mission for the elimination of all discrimination against persons with disability.

2. 1. 2 *Conference “Quality of Life and Services to Persons with Disability”*

The representative of the Commission Ms Rosanne Fenech, manager in the Commission Secretariat, attended a conference with the theme “Quality of Life and Services to Persons with Disability” held in Copenhagen in Denmark

2. 1. 3 *The Deafway Conference*

The Director of the Commission, Mr Alfred Bezzina, attended the Deafway II Conference which took place at Gaullaudet University in Washington D C where more than 9,000 delegates attended from more than 100 different countries. In this conference issues connected with the community of deaf persons were discussed and how these people can have more equal opportunities.

2. 1. 4 *Conference “No Discrimination + Positive Action = Integration”*

Through the two officials of the Commission secretariat, Mr Charles Borg and Mr Elvin Sciberras, Malta took part in a conference with the theme “No Discrimination + Positive Action = Integration” organized by the Spanish Presidency of the European Union. This conference took place in Madrid, Spain, last March and was attended by delegates from member countries and candidate countries of the EU. The Madrid Declaration in favour of equal opportunities for persons with disability and their families was issued at the end of the conference.

2. 1. 5 *Workshop “Disability Rights and Empowerment: Working Together”*

The Chairman of the Commission, Mr Joe Camilleri, attended a conference in Wales, United Kingdom, in February 2002, organized by the British Council with the theme “Disability Rights and Empowerment: Working Together”. The emphasis was focused on how persons with disability themselves can take important decisions in their life. Emphasis was also made on the need of a coordinated effort on an international level, and there was a discussion on the lack of young leaders from among persons with disability. All the participants were persons with disability and main activists in their country.

2. 2 The Commission opened discussions with the Maltese Ministry of Foreign Affairs so that Malta will give its support so that the United Nations will draw up a convention about the human rights of persons with disability. The United Nations appointed an ad hoc committee to study this issue.