

Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni b'Dizabilita'

ANNUAL REPORT – 2003

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

National Commission Persons with Disability

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 investigations 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 2003 and is being drawn up according to Article 30 of the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act.

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. The following table shows the changes that have occurred and the members of the Commission:

Table Number 1

Composition of the Commission 2003	
Name	Status
Mr Joseph M Camilleri ^(a)	Chairman
Mr. Edgar Galea Curmi	Ministry for Social Policy
Ms Mary Rose Mifsud Ms Miriam Aquilina ^(b)	Ministry of Education
Dr. Marvic Sammut	Ministry of Health
Mr. Alfred Camilleri	Ministry of Finance and Economic Services
Ms Claire Camilleri Mr. Noel Formosa ^(c)	Ministry for Gozo
Dr. Anthony Charles ^{(a) (d)}	Vice- Chairman
Ms Marthese Mugliette	Federation of Organisations for Persons with Disability (FOPD)
Mr. John Peel ^(a)	FOPD
Fr. Martin Micallef	Archdiocese of Malta
Dr. Marie Alexander	University of Malta
Ms Josette Pisani ^(a)	Local Council Association
Mr. Karl Borg ^(a)	
Ms Rita Borg ^{(a) (d)}	
Mr. Wenzu Dalli ^(a)	
Ms Pam Muscat ^{(a) (d)}	
Mr. Fred Bezzina	Secretary

^(a) These people are persons with disability or parents of persons with intellectual disability in accordance with article 21 of the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act.

^(b) Ms. Mary Rose Mifsud resigned and was replaced by Ms Myriam Aquilina as from September 2003.

^(c) Mr. Noel Formosa replaced Ms Claire Camilleri in September 2003.

^(d) Ms Rita Borg, Ms Pam Muscat and Dr. Anthony Charles have informed the Ministry for Social Policy that they no longer represent the Federation of Organisations for Persons with Disability (FOPD).

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 Miriam Aquilina, representing the Ministry of Education, Fr Martin Micallef, representing the Archdiocese of Malta, Mr John Peel, representing the Federation of Organisations for Persons with Disability and Dr. Anthony Charles.

4.3 During this year, the Commission held eight meetings, while the Executive held five other meetings.

4.4 The Commission continued to keep contact with the **President of Malta**, H.E. Prof. 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/ Ms. Marie Louise Coleiro for the Opposition by sending them the minutes of the meetings of the Commission as well as other reports.

4.5 During the year 2003, the Secretariat of the Commission issued the **bi-monthly reports** to the Ministry for Social Policy and to the members of the Commission. This report is published on the webpage of the Commission.

5. The Secretariat of the Commission

5.1 The Commission presented its **Annual Report** for the year 2002 during a press conference held in February 2002. This report was distributed among all those who work in this sector and can 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 persons in the Secretariat of the Commission working full-time and two working part-time. Ten of these have a disability. The Secretariat offers equal opportunities of work at all levels.

5.3 The Commission bought the services of ten **professionals** so as to be able to function more effectively. This included professional services about:

- (a) the Equal Opportunities Act;
- (b) vetting of various applications;
- (c) reports and home visits for the Social Aids Service;
- (d) vetting by architects of applications for development made to MEPA.

5.4 The Commission continued with its staff training programme. During this year two basic courses were held: one in First Aid and one in Maltese Sign Language.

5.5 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, especially in the light of the 2004 budget. The budget for next year has remained the same as that for the previous year.

5.5 The Commission continued working so as to bring its web site up-to-date especially in connection with its efforts, the activities held in celebration of the European Year of Persons with Disability and also to ensure that it is completely accessible to everyone.

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 regarding these benefits:

- The vetting of applications for development to MEPA;
- The exemption from customs duty on vehicles to the Ministry of Finance;
- The exemption from payment of road licenses to the Testing and Licensing Directorate;
- 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 (till May 2003);
- A subsidy on SMS and voicemail to persons with sensorial impairments by Go Mobile
- Free of charge websave from Datastream;
- Work Permits to the Personal Assistants to the Department of Citizenship.

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

Chapter 2

Plan of Action

1. The World Action Programme for Persons with Disability

The Commission must now conform to the **Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act**. Moreover, the Commission, as it has done in the past, has continued to follow the recommendations and proposals established by the United Nations as a model and recommended to all Governments in the **World Action Programme for Persons with Disability** issued in 1983. This report is modelled on this programme. At the end of 1993, the United Nations also published the **Standard Regulations for Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disability**. This document complements and continues to develop the World Action Programme. Consequently, during this period, the Commission also kept these Standard Regulations as an important reference in the execution of its work.

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 organisations or individuals.
- (c) publishing the National Disability Survey 2003 which includes statistics collected from this Register, and an analysis of this data on local and national basis.

2.2 The statistics about this Register for the year 2003 can be seen in this Table:

Table Number 2

STATISTICS ABOUT THE REGISTER		
	2002	2003
New persons with disability who answered the questionnaire	733	832
Registered persons with disability who updated the questionnaire	134	353
Questionnaires removed from the Register	1054	299
Total of persons with disability in the Register	7493	8026

2.3 The Commission receives various demands from different entities, like organisations for persons with disability, local councils, parish priests, university students, etc. to make use of this information. The Commission is strictly bound with confidentiality and, therefore, cannot divulge this information. However, it is committed to offer its help. The Commission asks those who use this service to request the information they need so that this can be furnished by the Commission itself. During the year 2003 the Commission provided this service to fourteen entities or individuals.

2.4. Five Year Work Plan

2.4.1 The Year 2003, apart from being the European Year of Persons with Disability was also the year of the General Elections in Malta. As is always done in these circumstances, the Commission presented a detailed memorandum to the political parties about the proposals that the Commission wanted to see included in the Parties' Electoral Programmes. For this reason, before the General Election, the Commission had various meetings with high level delegations from the three political parties in Malta: Alternattiva Demokratika, the Malta Labour Party and the Nationalist Party.

2.4.2 After the election, the Commission met the Prime Minister, the Hon. Dr. Eddie Fenech Adami and the Vice Prime Minister, the Hon. Dr. Lawrence Gonzi, to discuss this programme with them. The Prime Minister appointed the Commission to prepare a work plan for the coming five years based on the Commission's own proposals and on consultation with all the ministries and the entities involved in this sector.

2.4.3 The Ministry for Social Policy instructed all the ministries to appoint a representative to be in charge of this exercise. A meeting between these representatives, Dr. Gonzi and high officials of the Commission was held. This was followed by individual meetings between representatives of every ministry of the Commission. At the moment a draft is being prepared to be presented to the Government at a later stage.

Chapter 3

European Year of Persons with disability

1. The European Union declared the year 2003 as the European Year of Persons with Disability. The Commission organised various activities independently and in collaboration with various entities. These activities can be categorized in the following manner:
 - a. Activities that enhance the public awareness of this sector;
 - b. Activities that increase the awareness in this sector in the leaders and professionals of our country;
 - c. Activities that testify to the useful work done by persons with disability done in our society;
 - d. The National Week of Persons with Disability

2. Public Awareness

2.1. The Year's Slogan

This year was inaugurated during the Persons with Disability Week held in December 2002 and which had the slogan "Together we'll get there". This slogan was used throughout the whole year.

2.2. The Media

The Commission has sought to utilise the media throughout the year in order to raise public awareness regarding this sector. This was done mainly with the active participation in radio or television programmes or with newspaper articles by persons with disability themselves or the relatives of those who cannot represent themselves. The Commission ensured that there were:

- ⊖ 106 articles on various subject related to the disability sectors in various newspaper;
- ⊖ The participation of persons with disability or their relatives in 95 programmes on various television stations;
- ⊖ The participation of persons with disability or their relatives in 67 programmes on various radio stations;
- ⊖ The publication of a number of press releases including messages for Youths' Day, Woman's Day and Worker's Day.

2.3. Secondary Schools

Another initiative taken by the Commission to deliver its message to the public was to send persons with disability to give speeches to students of secondary school during the assembly. The Commission organised 53 such talks in government, church and independent secondary schools.

2.4. The Play "Lajf"

The Drama Unit of the Education Division organises a representation every year with a specific theme for the students of secondary schools. This year, the National Commission Persons with Disability and the Drama Unit set up a play with a theme related to persons with disability. The play, “Lives Worth Living”, written by Lawrence Evans and Jane Nash, was translated into Maltese by Marcelle Theuma and Paul Portelli, who were also the actors in it. The play was given the name “Lajf” in its Maltese version.

The Unit started visiting the schools that were going to participate weeks ahead. The actors prepared the students who were going to attend by involving them in discussions related to the theme of disability. After the performance the audience participated in a discussion chaired by Mr. Charles Borg who is visually impaired and an employee of the Commission.

In total there were 28 performances all held in the Drama Unit, Maria Regina Complex Blata l-Bajda. Due to the success of the play, it will be shown again to Form 3 students in the year 2004.

2.5. Presentation of Books

The Commission, thanks to a sponsorship by HSBC Bank Limited presented a number of books to the Hon. Dr. Louis Galea, Minister for Education, that will be placed in the libraries of all secondary schools. Every school was given two books from:

- o “A Different Life” by Lois Keith
- o “Don’t Call Me Special” by Pat Thomas
- o “People with Disabilities” by Pete Sanders and Steve Meyers

The presentation was held at the Maria Assunta Secondary School, Hamrun and was also attended by the Hon. Carmelo Abela, main opposition speaker for Education, Mr. Josef Camilleri, HSBC Manager, and Mr. Ray Vella, the school’s headmaster.

2.6. Skolasajf

This year the Commission participated in Skolasajf with a programme about persons with disability. Four persons with disability visited 20 schools in which they discussed the main factors that affect persons with disability. The programme lasted 3 days in every school and was built on the educational package “Holoq” that the KNPD gave for use in the schools.

2.7. Conference about “Sexuality and Disability”

The Commission offered its support for this conference that was organised by the National Council of Women at the Park of Friendship. Mr Joe Camilleri, chair of the Commission, together with Fr. Martin Micallef and Mr. Marcel Pisani, were the main speakers at the conference.

3. Greater Awareness Among Leaders and Professionals

3.1. Official Visit of the Prime Minister

On the occasion of the closing of the European Year, the Hon. Dr. Eddie Fenech Adami, Prime Minister, paid an official visit to the Commission in its offices in Sta. Venera. After meeting the staff and the members of the Commission he listened to the experiences of four persons with disability or their relatives relating to the following sectors:

- ⊖ Education - Ms Marchita Mangiafico, parent of a person with disability;
- ⊖ Day Services- Ms Pauline Galea, parent of person with disability;
- ⊖ Community Services- Ms. Doris Schembri, person with disability;
- ⊖ Accessibility to information technology and employment- Ms. Josianne Gauci, person with disability.

After a short speech the Prime Minister was presented with a mouth painting by an artist with disability and the year's publications of the Commission. The Hon. Dr. Lawrence Gonzi, Minister for this sector was also present.

3.2. The Parliament of Persons with Disability

During the week of Persons with Disability, the Commission organised the parliament of persons with disability in the President's Palace in Valletta. Five persons with different disabilities discussed with the Maltese Parliamentary Members five important sectors:

- a. Education by Ms. Ramona Vella, person with disability;
- b. Employment, by Mr. George Vella, a person with disability;
- c. Residential services, by Mr. Alfred Scicluna, parent of a person with disability;
- d. Day Services, Ms Marthese Deguara, person with disability;
- e. Information technology, Mr Michael Micallef, person with disability.

There were six interventions by deputies of both sides of the chamber and the session was concluded with speeches by the Hon. Dr. Alfred Sant, opposition leader, and the Hon. Dr. Lawrence Gonzi, Vice Prime Minister. This activity was shown on the day on TVM but attempts to broadcast it on NET TV and Super One TV were unsuccessful.

3.3. Official Visit of the General Vicar

On the occasion of this Year, Monsignor Annetto Depasquale, General Vicar, paid an official visit to the Commission in its offices. He met the staff of the Commission and later held a meeting with its members. During this meeting, the Commission presented him with a memorandum built on three important points:

- ⊖ Attitude and mentality;
- ⊖ Inclusive education;
- ⊖ Community services, including residential services.

At the end of the meeting Monsignor Depasquale was given a mouth painting made by a person with disability.

3.4. A Meeting with the Leaders of the General Workers Union

After some of its representatives participated in a seminar organised by the General Workers Union (GWU) on this sector, the Commission invited a delegation of this Union to make an official visit to the Commission as part of the activities for the European Year. The GWU accepted this invitation and a delegation consisting of Mr. Salvu Sammut (President), Tony Zarb (General Secretary) and Michael Parnis (educational secretary) visited the offices of the Commission. They met the staff of the Commission and later held a meeting with its members. In this meeting, the Commission presented them with a memorandum including practical suggestions on how the two sides can keep on working for the good of person with disability and their families.

3.5. A Meeting with the Leaders of Union Haddiema Maghqudin

A delegation of the Commission consisting of Mr. Joe Camilleri and Fred Bezzina accepted an invitation by the Union to address its Council. This meeting was held in the headquarters of the Union and during it ways of working for the welfare of persons with disability and their families were discussed. This meeting was a practical result of the seminar that the Union organised earlier in 2003.

3.6. A Meeting with Employers

The Malta Employers Association together with the Workers' Participation Centre of the University of Malta in collaboration with the Commission organised a Business Breakfast to discuss the employment of persons with disability. Apart from the personal experience of persons with disability there were also the experiences of employers, economists and also interventions by the Hon. Dr. Karl Chircop and the Hon. Dolores Cristina.

3.7. A Meeting with Parish Priests

The Commission, together with the parish priest college, organised a meeting for parish priests. In this meeting, which was attended by more than 30 parish priests, the services that the Commission gives to person with disability and their families and ways of how the Commission and the parish priests can collaborate for the welfare of persons with disability were discussed.

3.8. A Meeting with Doctors

The Commission together with the Health Department organised a meeting for all Maltese Doctors to allow persons with disability to express their opinions about how the services offered by these professionals can be more sensitive to the different needs of persons with a disability. In this meeting, there were the experiences of persons

with physical impairment, visual and hearing impairment and relatives of person with intellectual impairment. This meeting was attended by 25 doctors or specialists.

3.9. Activities with Social Workers

The Association of Maltese Social Workers decided that the theme for the social workers day of this year should be dedicated to the persons with disability. In the Annual General Meeting, they discussed the Equal Opportunities Act, the Commission's services and other services in the sector with the Commission. During the meeting the whole set of fact sheets of the Commission's services was presented.

This Association together with the Commission organised a blood donation day. This was held in the KNPD's offices and the participation was very satisfactory.

4. Useful Contributions of Persons with Disability

4.1. Nothing About Us without Us

At the beginning of this year, the Commission organised a seminar for the participants with disability of the course SEMMA' LEHNEK (Speak Out). This course had the theme "Nothing about us without us" and for the first time all the participants had a disability. There were 8 persons with a lack of mobility who used wheelchairs, six who are visually impaired and two who have hearing impairments. This group continued to meet with the coordination of the Chairman of the Commission on a regular basis also thanks to the internet.

4.2. Empowerment and Rights for Young Persons with Disability

One of the main activities of this year was the course "Empowerment and Rights for Young Persons with Disability" in which there was the participation of 28 youths with disability and their personal assistant from five different countries, that is, Malta, Belgium, Palestine, Algeria, Wales and England. The course was conducted by Mr. Joe Camilleri, chairperson of KNPD, Mr Mark Harrison and Ms Jacqui Christy James from the International Disability Equality Agency of De Montfort University Leicester. The Commission was given financial assistance by the Euromed office of the European Union. The course was coordinated by Ms Anne-Marie Callus from the secretariat of the Commission.

4.3. Commemoration of Persons who worked in this Sector

Another main activity organised by the Commission for this year was the commemoration of 31 persons who worked in this sector and who are no longer with us. This activity consisted primarily of a mass concelebrated by His Excellency Monsignor Joseph Mercieca, Archbishop of Malta at the Mdina Cathedral. After mass, relatives of these persons were given candles symbolizing the light they brought in helping persons with disability to have a better quality of life. These candles were produced by persons with disability at the Day Centre in Mtarfa. The Commission,

together with these persons, has published a booklet full of photographs and information. The persons commemorated in this activity were:

Abela Tanya, Azzopardi Andrew, Azzopardi Dennis, Azzopardi Michael (Mgr.), Burlò Joe, Dalli Joseph, Demanuele Guzi, Ellul Paul, Eminyan Dr. René, Galea Curmi Josette, Mr. Justice Wallace Gulia, Lowell Victor & Marie, Mallia Frank Anthony, Lady Margaret Mamo, Manfredi Toja Ughetta, Micallef Johnnie, Mintoff Moyra, Muscat Mario, Pace Connie, Pisani Andrew, Pisani Gori, Ripard Mary, Schembri Carmen, Stubbs Paddy, Tanti Sonia, Tonna Chev. Emmanuel, Tonna Maria, Vassallo Joseph and Zammit Montebello Alfred.

After mass, there was a small reception taken care of by persons with disability at the Day Centre in Mtarfa helped by their support workers.

4.4. Interfaith meeting - All Different, All Equal - Together We'll Get There

The Commission organised an interfaith meeting with the topic “All Different, All Equal - Together We'll Get There”. The main aim of this activity was to become aware that a society that celebrates diversity is also inclusive, a society where everyone is important whatever his or her faith or ability. This activity was organised by Mr. Charles Borg and Ms. Rita Borg. For this meeting a prayer and song written specifically for this occasion with the theme “together we'll get there” were prepared. The song was interpreted by Mr. Charles Borg.

The Commission invited various representatives from different religions in Malta to talk about the theme of diversity and disability. The religions which accepted this invitation were:

- Rev. Peter Wolfenden: Anglican church
- Rabbi Herbert Richer: Hebrew Community
- Mr. Tikamdas Bharwani: Indian Community
- Imam Mohammed Elsadi: Islamic Community
- Mr. Gordon Cardona: Catholic Church

The speeches delivered in this activity can be found on the Commission's homepage: www.knpd.org

4.5. Photography course

The Commission together with the Malta Photographic society organised a basic course in photography for persons with disability and their relatives. This course was attended by 14 participants who were all given a certificate of merit. This course was accessible to persons with hearing impairment thanks to the participation of a Maltese Sign Language interpreter.

4.6. Blood Donations

The Commission together with the Blood Bank of the Order of the Knights of St. John organised a blood donation day in its offices. Persons with disability and their relatives were encouraged to donate blood to show that they too are ready to give their contribution to society. The response was encouraging and there are plans to make this activity a regular one.

5. Disability Week

5.1. The Commission organised the Disability Week as an official closing to the European Year of Persons with Disability. This week was organised around the international day of persons with Disability, on the 3rd of December. It started on Saturday 29th November and ended on Sunday 7th December. The slogan chosen for this week was “Let’s go on together” (Inkomplu Flimkien).

5.2. For this week the Commission organised the following activities:

- Press Conference to announce this week, the theme, the poster and the programme.
- National Conference on Inclusive Education;
- Forum with the theme: Charity with Dignity as a closing of the course “Semma’ Lehnek”. The forum was organised by the Commission together with the Maltese Council of Persons with Disability and the Association of Parents of Persons with Disability
- A forum on research organised by KNPD and ETC;
- The Persons with Disability Parliament;
- The presentation of the third edition of the National Disability Survey;
- Two messages by the Commission on the theme “Inkomplu Flimkien” (Let’s Go On Together), one organised for adults presented to the media on the international day of persons with disability and the other addressed to children which was circulated in all the schools;
- Ministerial message by Minister Dr Gonzi who presented Ms. Dorianne Bezzina, a person with hearing impairment to deliver a message in his name on this day. This message was conveyed in the Maltese Sign Language;
- A poster with the theme of this week which was distributed around Malta and Gozo;
- Three billboards with the theme of the week “Inkomplu Flimkien” (Let’s Go On Together) set up by the Commission in Santa Venera, Marsa and Msida;
- A video on the same theme prepared by KNPD and shown free of charge by all television stations (TVM, NET, Super One, Smash, and Channel 12);
- A thanksgiving reception for all those who worked in this sector during the European Year for Persons with Disability held in the Foyer of the Ministry of Social Policy in Valletta.

Chapter 4

Rehabilitation

1. Representation on Various Boards

1.1 The Commission continued to participate in various boards that manage a number of **organisations** that have been set up in partnership with it. During this period, the Commission was represented in the following organisations:

- 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-governmental boards, which include:

- ♣ The Consultative Board of the Agency SAPPOR
- ♣ The Board which vets the applications of Scheme Seven of the Housing Authority
- ♣ The Board of Appeal of the Statementing Moderating Panel
- ♣ The Managing Board of the ATC in Ghajnsielem, Gozo
- ♣ The Civil Committee of the Maltese Council for Economic and Social Development
- ♣ The Service Allocation Committee of the Agency SAPPOR
- ♣ The Ministerial Committee for Inclusive Education
- ♣ The Malta Standards Authority
- ♣ The Task Force for Day Services
- ♣ The NGO Liaison 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		
	2002	2003
♣ New Applications	291	279
♣ On the waiting list	137 (47%)	83 (30%)
♣ Pending	3 (1%)	3 (1%)
♣ Persons who benefited from the service	151 (52%)	163 (58%)

♣ Applications no longer on the waiting list	-	30 (11%)
♣ Returned apparatus given to other applicants	8	4
♣ Returned apparatus	7	6
♣ Total sum of grants	Lm57,539	Lm60,160

2.2 During this year, the Commission decided that, in order to help more persons with disability who request this service, it should start subsidising 50% of the price (rather than 90%) up to a maximum of Lm500. This means the Commission subsidises 50% of the price of objects costing less than Lm 1000 and it gives Lm500 for objects costing more than Lm1000.

2.3 This service continued to work more closely with the **Community Chest Fund**. Persons who have been given financial support from this Service can apply for more financial assistance from this fund. Very often, these requests are met. Moreover, the Commission, together with the Foundation for Information Accessibility (FITA) reached an agreement with this Fund to accept applications for financial assistance to buy computers. More than 35 persons have already been given Lm500 by the Community Chest Fund to buy a computer. A substantial number of persons (30) are no longer on the waiting list as they have benefited or will benefit from the assistance by the Community Chest Fund.

3. Refunds of VAT

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

- (a) computers and computer accessories only in those cases in which the person would not have benefited from a Lm500 grant by the Community Chest Fund;
- (b) batteries for wheelchairs.

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

Table Number 4

VAT RREFUNDS		
	2002	2003
Refund of the VAT tax	Lm3498	Lm2954
Number of people who benefited	46	41

Chapter 5

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. On the occasion of the third anniversary since the enactment of this law, the Commission published the third annual report (**October 2002-October 2003**) of its work connected with 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 Louise Coleiro, chief spokesperson of the Opposition in this field.

1.2. 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	New 2003	Total	Closed	Total Closed	Open 2004
Work	7	32	6	31	1
Education	22	46	14	32	14
Services	17	46	14	38	8
Access	26	115	26	74	41
Homes	4	7	1	3	4
Insurance	3	5	2	4	1
TOTAL	79	251	63	182	6

1.3. During this year, the need was felt for a board that examines requests for exemptions because of valid reasons, as stipulated by the Equal Opportunities Act itself. For this reason, a board led by the Executive Director of the Commission was established. During this year, the board functioned in the following way:

Table 6

REASONABLE ACCOMODATION BOARD (EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ACT)	
	2003
♣ Requests for exemption	16
♣ Reasonable with conditions	9 (56%)
♣ Not Reasonable	5 (31%)
♣ Pending	2 (13%)

1.4. During 2003, the Commission managed to close successfully a number of complaints of discrimination. Among the most important ones there are:

1.4.1. Necessary Arrangement for a McDonalds' Employee

A person with disability complained with the company McDonalds that it was not taking his disability into consideration. After discussions between the Commission, the Company and the individual involved an acceptable solution was found and the person with disability kept his job.

1.4.2. Lack of a Facilitator

The Commission received a number of complaints that individual students with disability for some reason or other were not being given a facilitator. After discussions with the authorities of the Education Division, all these cases were solved. Fortunately, during this period, a clearer system of how this service is provided was introduced with the Statementing Moderating Panel and the Appeals Board. Thus, these complaints have decreased significantly.

1.4.3. Lack of a facilitator due to Illness of Leave

The Commission received various complaints that students with disability had to stay at home when their facilitator was absent due to illness or leave. After discussions with the Education Division, a system whereby absent facilitators are substituted by others was introduced. Discussions are taking place so that this system can be introduced in church schools.

1.4.4. The Need of a Laptop

The Commission received a complaint that a student with disability (dyslexia) needed a laptop in order to continue his education. After discussions between the Commission and the Education Division, this case was solved.

1.4.5. Special Arrangements during Exams

There were also complaints about the need of special arrangements during exams due to disability. In one case, there was no discrimination because the request that this student made went against the intrinsic content of the subject on which he was being examined. Two other cases were solved. The Commission notes that the Education Division now has guidelines about these requests which make it easier for students to know what their rights are.

1.4.6. Access to the Entrance to Parish Churches

The Commission started investigating the entrances to Parish Churches and this has led to the Parish Churches of St Helena, B'Kara, Ghajnsielem, Fontana, Hal Kirkop, B'Bugia and Kalkara to have an entrance which is accessible to everyone.

1.4.7. Access of the Entrance to Regional Tribunals

The Commission started investigating the entrances to premises where regional tribunals are held. These tribunals are types of courts where, amongst other things, one can pay fines given by wardens. Now, the tribunals of Valletta, Sliema, Zurrieq and Mosta have entrances which are accessible to everyone.

1.4.8. Access to St. James Cavalier Theatre

The Commission received complaints that the stage of this theatre was not accessible. After several discussions the case was referred to arbitration. The arbiter held that a ramp had to be built in six months. The necessary works were carried out and the case was closed.

1.4.9. Closed Toilets for Persons with Disability

The Commission received complaints that the toilets for persons with disability in B'Kara valley and near the playing field, Margaret Mortimer, in Sliema were being kept closed and persons with disability had to ask for these to be opened. The Commission discussed this problem with the respective local councils and the problem was solved.

1.5. Temporary Agreement

The Commission has also reached temporary agreements on a number of complaints. The most important include:

- (a) Access to the entrance of the Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- (b) Access to the primary school in B'Kara, the secondary school in Pembroke and the secondary school in Victoria, Gozo;
- (c) Access to the entrance of the cathedral in Mdina and the Parish churches of Gharb and Mosta.

1.6. Cases before the Court

According to the Equal Opportunities Act, as a last resort, the Commission has the right and the duty to seek to stop discrimination against persons with disability by taking legal steps both in Court and through arbitration. In 2003, the Commission had the following cases before the court:

1.6.1. Access to Best Western Les Lapins Hotel

The Commission received a complaint that the access to this hotel was not in line with the guidelines of the Commission. After long discussions, the hotel agreed to make changes but these never materialised. The Commission had no choice but to institute proceedings against the hotel.

1.6.2. Access to the Michele Peresso Ltd., Establishment

The Commission received a complaint that this establishment that sells products for the specific use of persons with disability was not accessible to them. The Company argued that it had a certain level of access but admitted that this was not in line with

the Guidelines of the Commission. It also agreed to rectify the situation. However, it never committed itself to a deadline. This complaint has been there for more than three years (it began in April 2000) and nothing has been done to carry out the necessary changes. The Commission instituted proceedings against the company in March 2001 and evidence is still being collected. The Commission is concerned that this case is progressing too slowly.

1.6.3. Access to the Invicta Ltd., Establishment

The Commission received complaints that this establishment which sells products for persons with disability was not accessible to everyone. The company built a temporary ramp which did not conform to the Commission's guidelines. The Commission did not accept this solution instituted proceedings against the company. In the meantime, the company started selling the apparatus from a more accessible building. The parties tried to reach an agreement on the costs of the case. Since no agreement was reached, this aspect of the case is still pending before the court.

1.6.3. The Use of SMS and SBT Company

The Commission received a complaint by the Deaf People's Association that the companies providing a breakdown service were not accessible to persons with hearing impairments since they could only be contacted by means of the telephone. The Commission asked these companies to make themselves reachable through SMS. Four companies accepted to offer this service while SBT refused. The Commission instituted proceedings against SBT. Discussions were held to solve the issue, and the company accepted to provide a number without publicising it. The Commission rejected this proposal and therefore the case had to continue.

1.7 Judiciary Protest

Moreover, the Commission presented a judiciary protest against these entities because no progress was being made in finding a solution:

- a) the University of Malta, due to the lack of access to Student's House;
- b) the Armed Forces of Malta, due to an alleged termination of employment of a soldier with disability.

1.8. Complaints which are still under Discussion

1.8.1. The Commission is discussing various complaints, the principal ones being:

- (a) Access to the top floor of the Presidential Palace;
- (b) Access to the Health Centre in Gzira;
- (c) Access to sanitary services at St. Luke's Hospital;
- (d) Access to the entrance of the parish churches in Cospicua, Gudja and Ghasri;
- (e) Access to the entrance of the Regional Tribunal in Zejtun, Qormi, and Fgura;
- (f) Insurance of persons with intellectual disability by HSBC;
- (g) Access to the Phoenicia Hotel;
- (h) Access to police stations;
- (i) Distribution of medicine in schools;

- (j) Facilitators
- (k) Rental or purchase of accessible homes or flats;
- (l) The employment of an police inspector;
- (m) A tax rebate for persons with disability in independent schools.

2. Budget for the Year 2004

As it has done in previous years, the Commission issued two statements with regard to the country's financial budget for the year 2004 and persons with disability. In the first statement the Commission made two requests while it gave its reactions to the budget in the second statement.

The Commission has again emphasised the need for more funds for

- a) Day Services for Adults with Disability;
- b) SAPPOR Agency to provide community residential services.

2.2. Every year a number of students with disability finish special schools and thereafter need day services. These are primarily provided by the Department for the Elderly and Community Services. Unfortunately, this department is not being given the funds necessary to provide such services resulting in the fact that, in 2003, 10 of these people were not given this service. These people will be provided with this service from the funds which were given in the 2004 Budget. However, the Department does not appear to have the necessary funds to provide this service to all those students who will finish special school in October 2004. The Commission will continue to work to reduce this problem.

2.3 SAPPOR Agency was established during the year 2003 to provide community services to ensure that persons with disability have the necessary support to continue living in the community and, where this is impossible, to provide houses where these can live with the necessary support. The Commission strongly believes that this was an important step towards assuring persons with disability and their families that they will be given equal opportunities. This new Agency was given funds and there has already been a lot of progress. However, the funds which it was given in 2004 are not enough for it to continue develop these services and, therefore, the number of persons who need its services will not be assisted. The Commission will continue to give its support to this Agency in order to reduce and eliminate this problem.

3 SPECIAL IDENTITY CARD (SID)

3.1.1. The Commission has continued to issue a Special Identity Card (SID) to persons with disability to help them have equal opportunities. The statistics for this service for this period are shown in the following table:

SPECIAL IDENTITY CARD		
	2002	2003
* New applications	760	832
* Accepted	745	823
* Refused	15	9

* Renewed	349	505
* Withdrawn	42	234
Total of persons with disability who hold the SID	6014	6603

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 35 – 36) or else from the Commission's website.

Chapter 6

Physical Access

1. The Principle of Physical Access to All

1. 1 During the year 2003 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 **MEPA** for buildings open to the public and which are of major use. The following table shows the statistics about this service:

Table Number 8

VETTING APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT		
	2002	2003
♣ Applications	466	486
♣ Recommended with conditions	223 (48%)	229 (47%)
♣ Not recommended	229 (49%)	196 (40%)
♣ More information requested	-	25 (5%)
♣ Pending	14 (3%)	36 (7%)

1. 2. 2 The Commission began to make inspections so that the MEPA 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 9

VETTING FOR THE CLEARANCE/COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATE		
	2002	2003
Applications	16	18
Recommended with conditions	9 (56%)	11 (61%)
Not recommended	6 (38%)	5 (28%)
Pending	1 (6%)	2 (11%)

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 is on the same level of last year and 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 relatively high, which means that the developers and/or the architects are not following the Guidelines that were published by the Commission and adopted by MEPA.

1.2.4 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 purpose the Commission is represented on the board of this Authority.

2. The Blue Sticker Service

2. 1 The Commission continued also to make recommendations to the Commissioner of Police so that persons with disability can 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 10

BLUE STICKER	2002	2003
New Applications	515	592
Recommended	483	573
Not Recommended	32	19
Number of persons who renewed the Blue Sticker	268	288
Retired	-	400

2. 3 The Commission has completed all its plans so that it can change 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, in the same way that the European Blue Sticker can be used in Malta.

2.4 One of the activities organised by the Commission with the Local Councils for the European Year of Persons with Disability was the compilation of a complete list of all those places where there are reserved parking spaces for persons with disability who have a blue sticker. This list is published on the homepage of the Commission. Moreover, the Commission has entered into an agreement with the publishers of the book mAZe so that these parking places can be indicated on the roadmaps of this book. This means that now, a person can know exactly where these reserved parking places for persons with disability are by means of the maps found in mAZe. This publication was presented to the public during a press conference by the Hon. Censu Galea, Minister for Transport and Telecommunications.

3. The Reserved Parking Areas

3.1 At the beginning of this year, the Commission reached an agreement with the Malta Transport Authority to the effect that the Reserved Parking Areas Service in front of the residence of persons with disability would be administered by the Authority. At the same time, the Review Panel of this service would be administered by the Commission. This agreement came into effect on the 1st of May 2003.

3.2 Up till the 1st of May 2003, the Commission made several recommendations to the Malta Transport Authority so that persons with severe mental disability would have a reserved parking area or keep clear sign in front of their residences. The recommendations of the Commission for this service during this period can be seen in this Table:

Table Number 11

RESERVED PARKING/KEEP CLEAR		
	2002	2003 (up till the 30th Of April)
New applications	254	126
Recommended for Reserved Parking	119 (47%)	66 (52%)
Recommended for Keep Clear Signs	16 (6%)	6 (5%)
Not recommended	113 (44%)	46 (37%)
Pending	6 (2%)	8 (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 Malta Transport Authority and the Health Division as members.

3.4 During this year, the Review Panel functioned in this way:

Table Number 12

REVIEW PANEL OF RESERVED PARKING		
	2002	2003
Applications examined	44	35
First decision confirmed	23 (52%)	20 (57%)
First decision changed	21 (48%)	12 (34%)
Pending	0	2 (6%)
Referred back to the authority	-	1 (3%)

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 13

EXEMPTION FROM REGISTRATION TAX		
	2002	2003
New applications	124	156
Recommended by the OHU	85 (69%)	97 (62%)
Not recommended by the OHU	11 (9%)	19 (12%)
Have not yet made use of the Exemption	9 (7%)	9 (6%)
Applications which were dropped	9 (7%)	14 (9%)
Pending applications	10 (8%)	17 (11%)

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) who have not yet made use of this exemption is the same of that of last year and therefore it appears that the system is working.

4.2.1 During this year we received several complaints that there were excessive delays for the applications to be examined by the OHU (Occupational health Unit of the Health Division). In order to quicken this procedure, it was decided that the certificate should indicate whether the disability is a permanent one or not. If the disability is a permanent one, so would the certificate be. This was a change from the previous procedure where the certificate was only valid for three years.

5. Exemption from Payment of Road Licence

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 Licence.

Table Number 14

EXEMPTION FROM PAYMENT OF ROAD LICENCE		
	2002	2003
New applications	116	136
Recommended	83 (72%)	79 (58%)
Not eligible	25 (22%)	26 (19%)
Withdrawn Applications	0	14 (10%)
Pending	8* (7%)	17* (13%)

* 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 Independent Living

6. 2. 1 At the end of 1994, the Foundation for Transport for Independent Living was established by the Commission and the Independent Living Foundation. During this year, this Foundation continued to give an individualised transport service to persons with disability, primarily for the purposes of work and education.

6. 2. 2 The Commission again gave a **financial grant** of Lm12,000 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.

Chapter 7

Information Accessibility

1 Collaboration with the Foundation for IT Accessibility (FITA)

The Commission has continued to give all its support to FITA in various ways so that the common aim of persons with disability to have access to IT can be reached. This has been done mostly by the two entities:

- a) collaborating so that there can be sections of journals, books and cds in the Resource Centre on this subject which can be used by all those who are interested;
- b) working together to organise a stand on this subject in the IT Fair which takes place every year in Naxxar;
- c) working together to distribute free of charge Microsoft Software packages through the help of the Ministry for IT;
- d) agreeing with the Community Chest Fund for the latter to give Lm500 to persons with disability to help them buy a computer;
- e) organising, together with MCAST, computer courses for persons with intellectual disability or hearing impairment.

2 Relay Service for Text telephone Users

The National Commission had several technical problems to make the relay service for those who have a Text telephone continue to function, so much so that this service was not provided for several months. Moreover, this service was only being utilised by few people and was costing a lot of money. The Commission solved the technical problems and negotiated a new rent agreement for the software and a new agreement for the fees payable to Dial-it (used to be SkyTel) so that this can give 24 years a day every day of service. It is hoped that this service will again start to function at the beginning of 2004.

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 at a lower cost. The activity in the sector during the year was as follows:

Table Number 15

WEBSAVE		
	2002	2003
* Applications	18	9
* Recommended	12 (67%)	8 (89%)
* Not eligible	6 (33%)	1 (11%)

4. SMS/Voicemail Service

The Commission started making recommendations to the GoMobile Company so that persons with hearing or visual impairments will benefit from a reduction on the SMS or Voicemail service subject 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 16

SMS/VOICEMAIL SERVICE		
	2002	2003
* Applications	102	15
* Recommended	86 (84%)	13 (87%)
* Not eligible	11 (16%)	2 (13%)

Chapter 8

Education

1. The Ministerial Committee for Inclusive Education

In the last few years, the Commission continued to do its part in this field especially by means of the Ministerial Committee for Inclusive Education. The Committee did not meet during this year despite of the Commission`s belief that this is a valid tool for helping the development of this sector.

In the meantime, the Minister of Education announced that he was going to implement a vast exercise for the revision of the whole sector. He has requested the Commission (together with other entities) to give its proposals on the best ways to implement this exercise. The Commission gave detailed proposals to the Minister.

2 The Statementing Moderating Panel and the Board of Appeals

The Statementing Moderating Panel and the Board of Appeal were established by the Ministerial Committee to examine requests for supported education. Although there are still things to be done, this is a step forward and the Commission is contributing through its representatives and the Chairman of the Commission, who is a member of the Appeals Board. 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 or her individual needs.

3 Educational policy for Persons with Disability

The Ministerial Committee for inclusive education has issued important documents on the policy which it intends to implement in this sector. The Commission has given due importance to this document through:

- a) its translation in Maltese;
- b) publication in Maltese and English on its homepage;
- c) the National Conference, which was organised during the Week of Persons with Disability in December, dealt with this document. In this Conference, emphasis was given to the need of every student with disability to have an individualised educational programme as is stated in this document. This was done mostly through the presentation of experiences of students with disabilities and their parents together with the opinion of an administrative panel. The experiences were those of Ms. Joanne Buhagiar, Marthese Galea, Sylvia Galea and Patrick Umanah, all parents of persons with disability and by Mr. Steven Mulvaney and Leon Sciberras, students with disability, the first suffering from hearing impairment while the second suffers from visual impairment. The administrators who contributed to the discussion were Mr. Charles Mizzi, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Father Dominic Scerri, the Archbishop`s delegate for education, Ms. Pauline Sammut, a/chair Statementing Moderating Panel, Mr. John Bencini, President

of the Malta Union of Teachers and Dr. Carmel Borg, Dean of the Faculty of Education in the University of Malta. A speech was also delivered by the Hon. Dr. Louis Galea, the Minister for Education. This Conference was held in the Westin Hotel and there was a more than satisfactory attendance of 150 persons. The Commission has also prepared a declaration on the needs of this sector which it will later formally present to the Ministry and the public.

4. Services after the Age of 16 years

4.1 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 has been discussed by all the entities concerned and was presented to the Ministry of Education.

4.2 As a result of this exercise, the Commission and MCAST have started discussing the means by which the College can offer equal opportunities to persons with disability by supporting students to access its various courses and by having special programs directed at persons with disability and especially those with intellectual disability.

5. The University

5.1 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.

5.2 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.

Chapter 9

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 specialised 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 continued to give its contribution to ETC for the implementation of a support scheme on a permanent basis so that persons with severe disability could enter the labour market and remain there. This Scheme was announced in May 2003 and all the preparatory work has been done in view of the planned functioning of this scheme as from the beginning of 2004. This scheme is going to be implemented through funds given by the Structural Funds of the European Union.

1.3 The Commission and the ETC have worked together on a research project about persons with disability and employment. The first results of this research were presented to the public in a forum held for this purpose during National Week of Persons with Disability.

1.4. The Commission commissioned the economist Gordon Cordina to carry out research into Social Benefits, Persons with Disability and Employment. This research has shown that there are strong arguments in favour of offering financial support so that persons with disability can work and not keep depending on social benefits. This research was also presented to the public in a forum held for this purpose during National Week of Persons with Disability. The Commission will continue working on this research and formulating concrete proposals on how this can be done.

Chapter 10

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

2.1 The Commission continued to work with those running these services for the continuous development of small Resource Centres in the community instead of large Day Centres. During this year another of these centres was opened in Swatar.

2.2 An agreement was reached to give financial assistance to the Equal Foundation to establish the FrancoSI cooperative so that persons with disability can do agricultural work.

3 Service for New Clients

The Commission received a number of complaints that some persons with disability, especially those who are no longer at the special schools, were not given the day service they need because of lack of resources. The Commission held a meeting with the Minister concerned, the Hon. Dr. Gonzi to discuss this problem. The Commission made a number of proposals, including increasing the budget allocation for this service in the following budget. With the publication of the last budget, the immediate problem was resolved. The Commission will make sure that this problem will not be repeated, especially since in September, 2004, a number of persons with disability will leave the special schools.

4 Self Advocacy

Apart from running these services, the Commission has also worked on a self advocacy programme called Together Group (Grupp Flimkien) for persons with intellectual disability with the aim of helping them take an active role in the decision making around them. This programme reached its fulcrum in October when there was the presentation of a research carried by and among clients in all Day Centres about what they like and about their wishes and ambitions. This was done through:

- a. a formal meeting held in the Day Centre in Hal Far which was presented by the persons with disability themselves and for which there was a good attendance, including the Parliamentary Secretary Dr Francis Agius, the Director of the Department, Mr. Michael Bezzina, the Chairman of the

Commission, Mr. Joseph M. Camilleri, officials from the Communication Therapy Unit, the Agency SAPPOR, parents and others.

- b. The publication of a leaflet explaining with simplified language the principal results of this research.

5 Meetings of the Commission

In order to help its members understand better what is happening in their sector and in order for them to be involved more directly, the Commission decided to organise a number of its meetings in places where there is work done with persons with disability. This is done after the Commission will have visited the relevant places and discussed the services provided with the workers and the clients of the place. During this year, the Commission held meetings in the Day Centres for Visually Impaired Persons in Santa Venera and the Day Centre in Hal Far.

Chapter 11

Residential Services

1. SAPPOR AGENCY

The Commission continued to give its full support to the Agency SAPPOR, which was previously known as the Supported Living Division within the Social Welfare Foundation. This Agency has the responsibility to develop community services to help persons with disability to live in the community and, when this is no longer possible, to provide them with small houses in the community with the necessary support. The Commission gave its full support to the Agency by:

- a) working to increase its budget;
- b) being represented on the Consultative Board of the Agency and in order for this Board to be reconstituted;
- c) continuing to give its support in the physical development of the Vajrita complex in Wied il-Ghajj, and the building of a small house in the Mtarfa community, both of which were opened this year and are now the home of a small number of persons with disability;
- d) being represented in the Service Allocation Committee that examines requests for services from this Agency.

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. The drafting of this law is ready and work will continue for it to be processed in Parliament as soon as possible.

3. Personal Assistance Scheme

A small number of persons with disability are buying personal assistant 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 now makes these recommendations after its professional people visit the applicants in their home. This year, the Commission made ten such recommendations.

Chapter 12

Action in the Community

1. Social Work with Persons with Disability

The Commission continued to work with the Unit of APPOGG Agency which provides services of social work to persons with disability and their families. This entailed the Commission providing premises for this Unit to operate from the Social Work Centre in Santa Venera, and to offer administrative assistance.

2. Representation in Organisations

The Commission is officially represented in the management board of these non-governmental organisations that were established as its partners:

- 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

3. Postage Subsidy to Voluntary Organisations

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

- Down Syndrome Association
- The Federation of Organisations 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;
- Caritas Group Persons with Epilepsy.

4. Work with Other Organisations

During this year, the Commission worked closely with a number of other organisations in order to reach its aims. Among these we find:

- Alternattiva Demokratika
- The Local Councils Association

- Dar tal- Providenza
- The Federation of Organisations 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
- General Workers Union
- Gozo Association for the Deaf
- The Multiple Sclerosis Society
- Gozo Association for the Visually Impaired (GAVI)
- Caritas Group Persons with Epilepsy
- Newspapers
- Malta Labour Party
- Mental Health Commission
- Commission for the Sick and Persons with Disability of the Catholic
- Action Movement
- Pastoral Commission for Persons with Disability
- Family Commission
- Maltese Council of Persons with Disability
- Maltese Women Council
- Nationalist Party
- The Order of St. John
- Malta Employers Association
- Malta Photographic Society
- Park of Friendship
- Radio Stations
- Television Stations
- Union Haddiema Maghqudin

5. Ministerial Committee for NGO's

The Ministry for Social Policy has a committee for Non-Government Organisations. One of the main aims of this committee is to allocate funds that this Ministry has at its disposition to these organisations. 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 13

Training and Research

1. Courses on Disability Issues

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 17

LECTURES ABOUT THE FIELDS OF DISABILITY		
Client	Course	No. of Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Malta <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faculty of Education - Faculty of Medicine - FEMA - Workers Participation Centre • Education Division 	B. Ed	311
	Facilitators	360
	M. Ed	6
	Social Work	50
	Gender Equality	45
	Early Education	25
	PSD Teachers	30
• MCAST	Teachers	69
	Counsellors	6
• Employment and Training Corporation	Jobcoaches	20
	Support Workers	25
	Child Care Workers	12
• Tourism Authority	Drivers	20
• Police Academy	Recruits	100
• Sedqa		20
• HSBC	Customer Care	45
• Organisations	Museum	165
	Respite Foundation	20
	Caritas	15
	Seminary (Gozo)	15
	Gharghur Parish	21
Equal Foundation	14	
Total		1464

2. PEKTUR (Continuous Education, Training and Research Programme)

This programme started in 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 seven applications and offered financial assistance to three applicants:

- A person reading for a doctorate in education;
- A person reading for a masters in education;
- The Down Syndrome Association in order to publish an awareness leaflet.

The programme received requests for persons to attend conferences in Malta and abroad related to disability issues. This programme does not accept such requests unless the request is for the reimbursement of extra expenses that a person with disability has in attending these conferences.

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

PEKTUR organised another SPEAK OUT (“Semma’ Lehnek”) course for eleven activists with disability. The aim of this course is to provide the participants with the necessary training to be leaders in this sector. The participants received a certificate during an activity called Charity with Dignity that was held during the Persons with Disability Week. The aim of this activity was to make the media sensitive to the importance of safeguarding the dignity of disabled persons in fund raising activities. Unfortunately, despite all the media being invited, the participation was not satisfactory at all.

4. Research

4.1 The Commission is working very closely with the National Office of Statistics in view of identifying the research which is necessary in this sector. For this reason, the two entities organised a consultative meeting in which four papers were presented and discussed:

- Education by Ms. Marchita Mangiafico;
- Work by Mr. Karl Borg;
- Law by Ms. Marianne Debone;
- Everyday Life by Mr. Wenzu Dalli.

The activity was concluded by the Hon. Edwin Vassallo, Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.

4.2 This year, three programmes of research in which the Commission was involved were completed:

- a) Persons with Disability and Employment, organised by the Employment and Training Corporation in collaboration with the Commission;
- b) Social benefits, Persons with Disability and Employment, commissioned by the Commission and carried out by the economist Dr Gordon Cordina;
- c) Day Services and their Clients, carried out by the Commission and the Department for the elderly and Community Services.

Chapter 14

Information and Public Education

1. Resource Centre

1.1 During the year 2003, the Commission continued to work on its Resource Centre which is located in its offices in the Social Work Centre at Santa Venera. Everyone can make use of it during office hours, including Saturday morning. The following table shows the statistics about this Centre:

Table Number 18

RESOURCE CENTRE			
	Lent	New	Total
• Books	1372	372	3530
• Periodicals	135	5*	29*
• Vidoes	77	17	425**
• Audio Cassettes	6	2	88
• Educational Aids	218	0	218
• CDs	45	40	50
• Persons using the Centre in 2003			280
• Persons registered with the Centre			997

* The Commission is subscribed with 29 different periodicals, 5 of which began in 2003.

** During this year there was a stock-taking of videos.

2. Commission Publications

During this year the Commission issued these publications:

- The fourth edition of the book **Services and Benefits for Persons with Disability** – a detailed collection of information about benefits and services offered in Malta to persons with disability;
- The third edition of the **National Disability Survey** – analysed statistics compiled by the Commission about persons with disability at a national and local level;
- **An Information Leaflet on the Commission's Services** that include the Commission itself, the Register of Persons with Disability, the Special Identity Card, the Equal Opportunities Act, the Special Aids Services, the Resource Centre, PEKTUR and the Disability Issues;
- **B`Tifkira** – biographical information about persons who worked in this sector and have passed away;
- **Equal Opportunities Act – Third Year**: a booklet about the main cases brought before the Commission because of discrimination against persons with disability in the third year since this Act came into effect;
- **The Commission's Annual Report for the year 2002.**

- 2.1 All these publications (with the exception of the National Disability Survey) can be obtained from the Secretariat of the Commission;
- a) in Maltese or in English in normal font;
 - b) in Maltese or in English in large font;
 - c) in audio format in Maltese;
 - d) on the Commission`s webpage (www.knpd.org) in Maltese or in English;
 - e) in Braille.

3. “Indaqs”

During the year 2003, the Commission continued to publish its newsletter “**Indaqs**” every six months, in May and November 2003, 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 in English, on audio, in large font or from the Commission’s web site.

Chapter 15

International Activity

1. European Disability Forum

The Commission is an observer member of the European Disability Forum (EDF) which is a principal organisation within the European Union within this sector. This organisation keeps the Commission informed about what is happening in Europe in this sector.

2. United Nations Convention

Discussions are being held at an international level with the aim of leading the United Nations to design a convention on the civil rights of persons with disability. In view of this the Commission answered a detailed questionnaire about disability issues in Malta. Moreover, the Commission has continued to keep contact with the Maltese Ministry for Foreign Affairs in order to ensure that Malta plays its part in this important initiative.

3. The European Union Directive

Another initiative at a European level is the request that, as a concrete result of the European Year for Persons with Disability, the European Union issues a directive which will have to be transposed into law in all member states in order to eliminate discrimination against persons with disability. Until now there has been no agreement on the matter and it is not clear whether the member states support this initiative. The Commission fully supports the initiative and encourages the Maltese Government to do the same.

4. Ministerial Conference of the Council of Europe

Malta participated in the Ministerial Conference on Persons with Disability that was held in the Council of Europe in Malaga, Spain. The Maltese delegation was led by the Hon. Dr. Francis Agius, parliamentary secretary within the Ministry for Social Policy. He was accompanied by Mr. Joe Camilleri and Mr. Fred Bezzina from the Commission. In this Conference it was agreed to consider the issue as concerning the human civil rights and not from the medical or philanthropic point of view. At the end of the Conference there was a political declaration.

5. European Year of Persons with Disability

The Ministry of Social Policy asked the Commission to appoint Mr. Joe Camilleri and Mr. Fred Bezzina, chairman and director of the Commission, as the Maltese representatives in the official opening of the European Year of Persons with Disability held in January of this year in Athens, Greece.

Dr. Tony Charles, vice-chairman of the Commission, represented the Ministry of Social Policy at the closing ceremony of the European Year of Persons with Disability held in December of this year in Rome, Italy.

6. EU Desk

The Commission felt the need to appoint a manager to be in charge of, among other things, the EU Desk in its Secretariat. Ms. Anne-Marie Callus, who has this responsibility, went on a one-week study visit in Brussels, Belgium. The theme of this visit was the European Union and Persons with Disability. This visit was organised by the European Union Visitors' Programme.

7. Together for Europe

Malta is a member for the network together for Europe that has the aim of organising European activities for adults with intellectual disability. Malta is a member of the Committee which in charge of this network. In April 2002, the Committee met in Malta and the following meeting was held in Lisbon, Portugal. This meeting was held in April 2003 and Malta was represented by Mr. Fred Bezzina, executive director of KNPD and Mr. Marcel Pisani, chief executive of SAPPOR Agency. Thanks to this network, various initiatives were taken:

- ⊖ Eight Day Centre support workers received training in Portugal;
- ⊖ Four persons with disability together with two support workers attended the arts festival held in Cologne, Germany.
- ⊖ A group of persons with intellectual disability from Sheffield came to Malta and a group of Maltese persons with intellectual disability went to Sheffield;

8. Visit of a European Lecturer

The Commission together with the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, invited Mr. Mark Harrison, who is the co-ordinator of the International Disability Equality Agency, to visit Malta in order to give a number of lectures. Mr. Harrison gave six lectures to students reading for a diploma in Education (Individual Educational Needs) and also held a meeting with representatives of the Maltese Council of Persons with Disability. During his visit, he also discussed with the representatives of the Commission, the training course for youths with disability that the Commission was organising in the following October in Malta and which was to be conducted by him.

9. European Conferences

The Commission has continued to send Maltese representatives to European Conferences and activities. The Commission made sure that there is wide representation and that persons with disability have the opportunity to participate in the conferences. In fact, 19 different persons represented the Commission in these conferences, nine of whom had a disability.

- ⊖ **Conference about the Equal Programme**

This Conference was organised by the Presidency of the European Union for countries that were going to join the Union. The conference was held in Stockholm, Denmark and the Maltese delegation included Mr. Fred Bezzina, director of the Commission.

⊖ **Education and Life Long Learning – Equal Treatment**

This Conference was organised by the European disability forum and the European Trade Union Council (E.T.U.C.). This Conference was attended by participants by twenty four different European Countries and Malta was represented by Mr. Michael Micallef, FITA official and Mr. Sandro Micallef, KNPD official. This Conference was held in Salonica, during the Greek presidency of the European Commission.

⊖ **Transforming Disability to Ability**

This Conference was organised by the European Commission and Malta was represented by Ms. Anne-Marie Callus, an official in the Secretariat of the Commission.

⊖ **Towards a Europe without Obstacles for Persons with Disability**

This Conference was organised by the EDF and the European Youth Forum on the occasion of the European Year for Persons with Disability and was held in Athens, Greece, during the Greek presidency of Persons with Disability, The Commission, together with the National Youth Council sent delegation of Maltese youths composed of Ms. Maria Azzopardi, (a Maltese sign language interpreter), Ms. Dorianne Bezzina, Ms. Daniela DeBono, Mr. Clifford Portelli, Ms. Josianne Sammut, and Ms. Mary Kay Zammit.

⊖ **Disability Studies - Political Theory and Practice**

Mr. Joe Camilleri, chairman of the Commission, attended this conference in Lancaster in the United Kingdom.

⊖ **Residential Services in Sweden**

Mr. Fred Bezzina, director of the Commission, together with representatives of support agency, attended a seminar on residential services in Stockholm, Sweden.

⊖ **Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disability**

Mr. Charles Borg, an official in the Secretariat of the Commission attended a conference in Vienna, Austria about Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disability. The Commission also sent Mr. Gordon Cardona as a representative of persons with disability, Mr. Jesmond Bonello as a representative of the unions and Mr. Joe Delia , as a representative of employers.

⊖ **European Law and Persons with Disability**

Ms. Marianne Debono, manager of the Equal Opportunities Department in the Secretariat of the Commission and Dr. Doreen Clarke, the lawyer of the Commission, attended a conference in Leeds, United Kingdom.

⊖ **Youth Camp**

Mr. Keith Callus, Mr. Leon Sciberras and Ms. Maria Azzopardi, Maltese sign language interpreter, were part of the Maltese delegation in youth camp in Oporto, Portugal.

⊖ **Educational and Vocational Opportunities for Everyone**

Ms. Anne-Marie Callus attended a conference in Reykjavik, Iceland about this subject dealing with projects from various European countries carried out thanks to the EU Leonardo programme.

10. Support to Other Entities

The Commission has given its support to entities working in this sector and also to individuals with disability to benefit from European Union programmes or international activities. During this year, the secretariat of the Commission assisted:

- (a) the Deaf People's Association to send its full time interpreter to the United Kingdom to gain work and vocational experience. This was done thanks to the Leonardo Programme;
- (b) a person with disability to apply for funds from the Leonardo Programme in order to go to the United Kingdom on a work and vocational experience;
- (c) a person with disability to attend an international congress with the theme "Women and Disability" which was held in Valencia, Spain and organised by ONCE, a Spanish Foundation which is very active in this sector.

Principal Activities in the Year 2003

Activities for Greater Awareness

- ⊖ The Commission organised the **Persons with Disability Week** as an official closing to the European Year of Persons with Disability between Saturday 29th November and Sunday 7th December. The slogan chosen for this week was "Inkomplu flimkien"(Let's Go On Together).
- ⊖ The Commission helped in the publication of 106 **articles** on various issues related to disability in various newspapers.
- ⊖ The Commission took care of the participation of persons with disability and/ or their relatives in 95 **programmes** on different television stations and 67 **programmes** on different radio stations.
- ⊖ The Commission together with the Maltese Council of Persons with Disability and the Association of Parents of Persons with Disability organised an activity with the theme "Charity with Dignity" with the aim of making the media sensitive to the importance of safeguarding the dignity of persons with disability in fund raising activities.
- ⊖ Ministerial Message for the International Day of Persons with Disability by the Minister Dr. Lawrence Gonzi, who presented Ms. Dorianne Bezzina, a person

with hearing impairment, to give her message on his behalf in the Maltese sign language.

Contact with Leaders and Professionals

- ⊖ The Prime Minister, the **Hon. Dr. Eddie Fenech Adami** and **Mgr. Bishop Annetto Depasquale, General Vicar** made an official visit to the Commission in the Sta. Venera offices;
- ⊖ the Commission organised the **Parliament of Persons with Disability** in the President's Palace in Valletta so that persons with disability have the opportunity to discuss their issues directly with members of parliament. This parliamentary session was shown on TVM;
- ⊖ A delegation of the **General Workers Union** composed of Mr. Salvu Sammut, Tony Zarb and Michael Parnis visited the Commission in its Sta. Venera offices.
- ⊖ A delegation of the Commission addressed the General Council of the **Union Haddiema Maghqudin**;
- ⊖ The **Malta Employers' Association** organised a Business Breakfast to discuss employment and persons with disability, together with the Workers' Participation Centre of the University of Malta and in collaboration with the Commission;
- ⊖ The Commission and the **College of Chaplains** organised a meeting for Maltese chaplains to discuss the work of the Commission and the method in which these two parties can work together;
- ⊖ The Commission and the Health Division organised a meeting in which **doctors** and persons with disability had the opportunity to discuss the method in which medical services could be more sensitive to the different needs of persons with disability;
- ⊖ The Commission addressed the Annual Meeting of the **Association of Maltese Social Workers** which worked in this sector.

The Equal Opportunities Act

- ⊖ The Commission established a **Board to examine exemptions on reasonable grounds** in accordance with the Equal Opportunities Act;
- ⊖ The Commission filed **proceedings against Les Lapins Hotel** on grounds of lack of access;

- ⊖ The Commission filed a **judicial protest against the University of Malta** on the grounds of lack of access to Student's House and against the **Armed Forces of Malta** on grounds of an alleged dismissal of a soldier with disability;
- ⊖ The Commission **continued to proceed against Peresso Ltd, Invicta Ltd and SBT ltd.**

Services to Persons with Disability

- ⊖ Prior to the General Election, the Commission presented a **detailed memorandum to the political parties** on its proposals with regard to their electoral programme;
- ⊖ The Prime Minister instructed the Commission to prepare a **Scheme of Work for the coming five years** for this sector;
- ⊖ The Commission and Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA) reached an agreement with the **Malta Community Chest Fund** to the effect that applications for funds to buy a computer would be accepted from the Fund;
- ⊖ The Commission reached an agreement with the Malta Transport Authority so that the latter could give **Reserved Parking and Keep Clear Services** to persons with disability;
- ⊖ The Commission worked together with the Local Councils to compile a list of all the **reserved parking bays** for persons with disability who have a Blue Sticker. These places have been marked on maps published in **mAZe**.
- ⊖ The Commission and FITA have, through the Ministry for Information Technology distributed, free of charge **Microsoft software** packages to persons with disability;
- ⊖ The Commission emphasised the need that the **budget for the year 2004** made provision for more funds to be allocated to Day Centres for Adults with Disability and SAPPOR Agency so that it can provide residential services in the community.
- ⊖ The Commission gave its full contribution so that:
 - ⊖ SAPPOR Agency could open a new residential complex in Vajrita in Marsascula and a new house in the Mtarfa Community;
 - ⊖ The Employment and Training Corporation could implement a permanent support scheme so that persons with disability can enter and stay in the working environment;

- ⊖ **MCAST** could offer equal opportunities to students with a disability even through offering new programmes;
- ⊖ A new **centre** could be opened in the **Swatar Community** to offer Day Services;
- ⊖ A financial agreement could be reached with the Equal Foundation to establish the **FroncoSI Cooperative** so that persons with disability would be able to perform agricultural work;
- ⊖ The Department for the Elderly and Community Services could provide **Day Services** to students who had finished special schools by September 2003.

The Education Sector

- ⊖ The Commission organised a **National Conference on Inclusive Education** and the need of every student with disability to have an individualised programme;
- ⊖ The Commission prepared a comprehensive document on **education after the age of sixteen** which it presented to the Ministry of Education;
- ⊖ The Commission presented a number of **books on persons with disability to libraries** in all secondary schools through a sponsorship by HSBC;
- ⊖ The Commission participated in Skolasajf with a programme about persons with disability called “Holoq”. Four persons with disability visited 20 schools in which they discussed the main factors that affect persons with disability.
- ⊖ The Commission organised an activity where persons with disability were invited to make speeches to all the students in 53 different schools during the **assembly**;
- ⊖ The Drama Unit of the Education Division ,with the support of the Commission, gave 28 performances of **Play Lajf** (a translation of the play Lives Worth Living) to Form 3 students.

Knowledge Division

- ⊖ The Commission organised a residential seminar “Xejn Dwarna Minghajrna” (Nothing Around Us Without Us) to 16 participant with disability.
- ⊖ The Commission, together with the Department for the Elderly and Community Services, worked on a programme on **self advocacy for persons with intellectual disability** for persons who attend Day Centres;
- ⊖ The Commission organised another seminar “**Semma Lehnek**”(make your voice heard) to 11 activists with disability

- ⊖ The Commission gave a basic **First Aid** course and a basic **Maltese sign language** course to its employees;
- ⊖ The Commission offered its support to a conference that was organised by the National Women Council on **Sexuality and Disability**;
- ⊖ The Commission organised a **basic photography course** together with the Malta Photographic Society for persons with disability and their families.

The Research Sector

- ⊖ The Commission commissioned the economist Gordon Cordina to carry out research into **Social Benefits, Persons with Disability and Employment**.
- ⊖ The Commission and the National Statistics Office organised a consultative meeting so as to prepare a **research plan** on this sector;
- ⊖ The Commission and the Employment and Training Corporation worked together on research regarding **persons with disability and employment**;
- ⊖ The Commission, together with the Department for the Elderly and Community Services worked together on research which had been conducted with **persons with intellectual disabilities and their expectations** (a booklet was published on the results of this research).

Publications

- ⊖ The Commission published:
 - ⊖ **Services and Benefits for Persons with Disability** which is a collection of information on the benefits which this country offers in this sector;
 - ⊖ **National Disability Survey** which contains statistics collected by the Commission on persons with disability on a local and national level and their analysis;
 - ⊖ **Leaflets on information regarding services offered by the Commission**;
 - ⊖ **B'Tifkira** (memento) which contains biographical information on persons which worked in this sector and who are no longer with us;
 - ⊖ **Indaqs** (Equal) – a Commission newsletter which was issued in May and November.

International Activity

- ⊖ The Commission established **an EU Desk** in its secretariat;

- ⊖ The Commission organised a course entitled “**Empowerment and Rights for Young Persons with Disability**” in which participated 28 young persons with disability and their personal assistants from Malta, Belgium, Palestine, Algeria, Wales and England;
- ⊖ Malta took part in the **Ministerial Conference on Persons with Disability** which was organised by the Council of Europe in Malaga, Spain. The Maltese delegation was made up of the Hon. Dr. Francis Agius, parliamentary secretary in the Ministry for Social Policy and Mr. Joe Camilleri and Mr. Fred Bezzina from the Commission;
- ⊖ The Commission took part in a committee meeting of the network **Together for Europe** which was held in Lisbon, Portugal;
- ⊖ Mr. Joe Camilleri and Mr. Fred Bezzina, chairman and director of the Commission, represented Malta in the **Official Opening Ceremony of the European Year for Persons with Disability** which was held in Athens, Greece;
- ⊖ Dr. Anthony Charles, Vice-chairman of the Commission represented Malta in the **Official Closing Ceremony of the European Year for Persons with Disability** which was held in Rome, Italy.

Other Activities

The Commission organised an **interfaith meeting All Different, All Equal - Together We'll Get There**. The participants for this activity were the Anglican church, **the** Hebrew Community, The Indian Community, The Islamic Community and the Catholic Church.

- ⊖ The Commission organised a **Commemoration** of 31 persons who worked in this sector and are no longer with us, led by the Archbishop in the Mdina Cathedral.
- ⊖ The Commission together with the Blood Bank of the Order of the Knights of St. John organised two **blood donation** days in its offices, one of which was organised together with the Association of Maltese Social Workers.
- ⊖ Ms. Rita Borg, Pam Muscat, and Dr. Anthony Charles have informed the Ministry for Social Policy that they no longer represent the **Federation of Organisations for Persons with Disability (FOPD)**.