

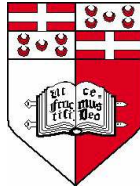
**KUMMISSJONI NAZZJONALI
PERSUNI B'DIZABILITÀ**



**NATIONAL COMMISSION
PERSONS WITH DISABILITY**

MALTA

L-UNIVERSITÀ TA' MALTA UNIVERSITY OF MALTA



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Access to Professional Training for Persons with Disability

KNPD, UoM and MCAST have teamed up in an International Project to make it easier for persons with disability, and other socially disadvantaged groups, to take up University and third level studies.

The Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni b'Dizabilità (KNPD), University of Malta and MCAST are cooperating in “APT-Leonardo – Access to Professional Training for Persons with Disability”, a project funded by EU programme Leonardo da Vinci.

The project aims at:

- encouraging and supporting disabled persons to undertake university and third level courses in social work, social policy, youth studies and social care
- developing a learning approach which will serve as a model of good practice and go to enable the provision of such support and empowerment to spread throughout all levels of the University, MCAST and third level courses.

The University of Malta, KNPD and MCAST are committed to:

- giving, through the Department of Social Policy & Social Work, a preparatory APT course to persons with disabilities or social disadvantage who intend to apply soon to join social-work related courses, to help them overcome disadvantages that may accumulated as a result of their disability;
- supporting each participant through a student-mentor for the duration of the preparatory APT course (Feb.-May 2007);
- preparing existing university students (in the first semester of 2006/07) to act as mentors by encouraging, training and matching them with the mentee students that they will support;
- working for this approach to permeate to other courses and faculties at a later stage;
- working in partnership with MCAST so that prospective students with disability can be similarly helped to join their social care course and subsequently other courses also on offer.

A short course on 'Access to Professional Training' is being offered by the Department of Social Policy and Social Work within the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy. The course addresses the needs of persons who are interested in taking up a course in Social Work, Social Policy, Social Care, Youth Studies or Social Care, and possess, or who are on the way to obtaining the required entry qualifications, and who have a disability, or other social disadvantage.

The course consists of about 15 hours of sessions that are intended to facilitate access to such studies. The course will include further sessions that introduce participants to the course and the experience and the demands it carries with it and the profession it leads to. In this way, the structure of the course is intended to help students to develop key skills involved in pursuing the course, including study and relational skills and skills in managing the life challenges that participants have to face.

Each participant will have the support of a student from a related course acting as mentor, a friend with experience and a readiness to help. Participants who successfully complete the course will be presented with an attendance certificate.

This course is being prepared and promoted with the help of Leonardo funds in an international project in which the University of Malta is in partnership with Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni b'Dizabilita' (Malta), Marie Curie Foundation (Bulgaria) and Social Services Department of Sliven, Bulgaria, and de Montfort University, Leicester (project co-ordinator).

KNPD and the University of Malta have appointed a Steering Committee to run this Project which will be dealing with all the necessary preparations for this course to meet the targets of the Project and looking into the possibility of extending similar courses to other faculties at the University. The cooperation has been extended to the Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology, who are now participating fully in the project.

Since this course is built on the Social Model of Disability, persons with disability are already participating actively in the Steering Committee's decision-making process. Further involvement of disabled people involves their giving lectures for the training of mentors at University; providing feedback to KNPd about the accessibility of the Project's website and will also be involved in the training to be given to students in the course to be held at University between February and April 2007.

Three International Partners Meetings have been held. The first meeting was held in Plovdiv (Bulgaria), the second one in Malta and the last one in Sliven (Bulgaria). During this meeting, every participating country presented a report of the work that had been done on this project. Malta was represented by Dr Charles Pace, on behalf of the University of Malta, and Ms Rosanne Fenech, representing KNPd. In Malta, this course is going to be held at the University between February and April 2007.

Thus, this year's course is linked with UoM's social work, social policy, social care and youth studies courses, and the social care course at MCAST. But it is also envisaged as a pilot and a door-opener so that courses and measures facilitating university and third level studies become normal practice, spreading as rapidly as possible to all academic and third level courses.

For more information or to apply contact:

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Project website: <http://www.apl-leonardo.org/Default.aspx> (work in progress)

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