**Introduction**

A number of efforts have been undertaken by different stakeholders in Malta towards the implementation of Article 13 UNCRPD (Access to Justice) for persons with disability. These efforts have also been particularly stepped up following the issue of the UNCRPD Committee’s Concluding Observations concerning Malta in October 2018, following Malta’s review by said Committee. While a number of milestones have been registered, a concerted effort, involving multiple stakeholders, with a particular emphasis on persons with disability and their representative organisations, continues to be ongoing, towards further and full implementation in Malta of the rights in terms of said Article.

**Civil Society Consultations and Training**

The following *meetings and training sessions* were organised in relation to Article 13, by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), Malta’s independent monitoring mechanism in terms of the UNCRPD.

In *January 2019*, a *short survey* was also sent to NGOs and DPOs to gather feedback on the challenges and barriers experienced by people with disability to access the justice system. Barrister John Horan, a disabled barrister and activist at UK and European level, was invited by CRPD as a foreign guest during the following events:

*27th February 2019* – Meeting with NGOs and DPOs to gather feedback on challenges experienced by people with disability to access the justice system. This meeting was headed by Barrister John Horan.

*28th February 2019* (1-2pm) – Seminar on EU Perspectives of the UNCRPD by Barrister John Horan. This Seminar was held at the Law Courts of Malta’s training room and targeted lawyers and other people working in the disability sector.

*28th February 2019* (2-4pm) – Training to the members of the Judiciary. This training was delivered by Mr. Christian Camilleri (CRPD), Dr. Alistair De Gaetano (ODI) and Barrister John Horan. Specific challenges faced by disabled people to access the justice system were mentioned during this training.

**Discussions with Law Courts Administration and Jurisprudence**

Following the training to members of the Judiciary, a *meeting was held with the Chief Justice*, whereby agreements in principle were reached – following recommendations by members of the Judiciary at the training – to *amend relevant subsidiary legislation concerning court costs*, to ensure better accessibility for persons with disability.

The recommendation to *appoint specific members of the Judiciary, with particular knowledge in disability rights, to hear disability-related discrimination cases*, was also agreed upon in principle.

These initiatives will build upon current gains achieved through jurisprudence, such as through *National Commission for Persons with Disability v. Director-General for Health et* (Civil Court, First Hall, 12/11/2013 – 590/2005/SM) concerning the provision of Sign Language interpretation (LSM (Maltese Sign Language) was eventually declared a national language, with particular rights of use, including in the justice system, attached thereto), and *Police (Insp. Angelo Gafa’) v. Rosanne Galea & John David Galea* (Court of Criminal Appeal, 06/03/2014 – 152/2013/MM) concerning the requirement of physical accessibility of buildings for persons with disability.

We will also be holding a meeting with the Director-General of the Law Courts of Malta to discuss the possibility of *delivery of Disability Equality Training (see below) to customer care, administrative and other staff at the Law Courts of Malta*.

**Disability Equality Trainings**

For the past years, CRPD was engaged in the delivery of disability sensitivity trainings known as Disability Equality Trainings (DETs), to staff members of different public and private (ex. commercial banks) institutions. These trainings are prepared and delivered by persons with disability.

*Training to LESA* (Local Enforcement System Agency – responsible for Local Wardens) officers was carried out on the 23rd April 2019

*Training to staff of the Civil Protection Department* was carried out between October - December 2018

*Training to staff of the Corradino Correctional Facility* (Malta’s Central Prison) – CRPD is also in touch with the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security (MHAS) to provide DET sessions to prison staff at the Corradino Correctional Facility

*Training to Police officers*

Disability Equality Training sessions delivered to Police are 1.5 hours long and cover the models of disability, legislation, the use of Blue Badges and disability etiquette (including case studies). The training sessions are now being followed by a short assessment which includes questions with multiple choice answers for the Police following these sessions.

During this past year, training to Police as *part of their Continuous Professional Development* was carried out on the following dates:

23rd January 2019  
6th February 2019  
20th February 2019  
6th March 2019  
3rd April 2019

*Training to New Police Recruits* (this is now a *required module* on the Police Academy’s curriculum) was delivered last year on the following dates:

31st July 2018  
9th August 2018  
10th August 2018

**Training to Law Students**

A *meeting with the Dean at the Faculty of Laws, University of Malta* was held in February 2019 to discuss the UNCRPD's Concluding Observations following Malta’s Country Review. It was decided that a *lecture was to be delivered to first year law students, as part of their mandatory Human Rights Law credit*, in order to increase awareness of the relevant provisions contained in the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act and the UNCRPD, as well as in other key primary and secondary legislation, at both national and supranational level, that is currently in force or else being developed.

This lecture was *delivered for the first time in May 2019* by Dr Bernard Busuttil and Dr Alistair de Gaetano, and this *lecture will also be carried out again in the future*.

**Autism-specific Disability Equality Trainings**

Following a suggestion by the Autistic Persons Working Group of Malta’s Autism Advisory Council, *autism-specific content to be added to DETs mentioned above, as well as autism-specific DETs to be delivered to particular stakeholders* (ex. Malta Police Force), were suggested by said Working Group.

*Particular content is now being discussed and developed* by said Working Group, for the issue to be then discussed with CRPD, who are being involved in the process.

It was also discussed that delivery of any autism-specific content would involve the participation of autistic persons in said DETs.

**Development of New Legislation**

A *draft Bill extending the concept of hate crimes also to persons with disability* has received the green light from the Parliamentary Secretariat for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing (PSDAA), the Office of the Attorney-General, and the Legislation Unit within the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government (MJCL), and a Consultation will be launched in September 2019, after which said Bill will be tabled in Parliament following approval by the Cabinet of Ministers.

Work on the *Personal Autonomy Bill*, as well as the related *Protection of Adults in Situations of Vulnerability Bill*, is also at an advanced stage, towards improving Access to Justice particularly by bringing about key changes vis-à-vis the rights of persons with disability to exercise their legal capacity, in terms of Article 12 UNCRPD.

A *UNCRPD Bill* is also being tailored further, side-by-side with discussions on amendments to the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act, that *would make Article 13 UNCRPD directly justiciable*, while *providing specific provisions, as well as mechanism, for its exercise by persons with disability*.