

ANNUAL REPORT **2021**



Aġenzija Sapport, Malta **Annual Report, 2021**

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ABBREVIATION LIST

A&I	Assessment and Intervention
AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
AACC	Active Ageing and Community Care
ACTU	Access to Communication & Technology Unit
CMS	Case Management System
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRPD	Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
EASPD	European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities
EAT	Electronic Assistive Technology
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
EIRA	Employment & Industrial Relations Act
EMP	Electoral Manifesto Proposal
ESF	European Social Fund
ESN	European Social Network
ESP	Employee Support Programme
HR	Human Resources
ICLM	Independent Community Living Monitoring
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISP	Individual Support Plan
IT	Information Technology

LSEs	Learning Support Educators
LSM	Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija
MATP	Motor Activity Training Program
MEA	Malta Employers' Association
MFCS	Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity
MHFA	Mental Health First Aid
MOP	Manual of Procedures
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPPI	Non-Abusive Psychological and Physical Intervention
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
OT	Occupational Therapist
PAS	People Assistance Schemes
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities
PSP	Public Social Partnership
SLI	Sign Language Interpreter
STILC	Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disability
VAT	Value Added Tax
VRI	Video Remote Interpreting

OUR MISSION

The National Agency that provides professional and innovative services to enhance the quality of life of persons with disability.

OUR VALUES

Integrity
Respect
Equity
Empathy
Co-production

OUR VISION

To be the leader in guiding the community which promotes ability rather than disability.





HON. JULIA FARRUGIA PORTELLI
MINISTER FOR INCLUSION,
VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS AND
CONSUMER RIGHTS

FOREWORD

There is everything to feel proud and grateful about the situation in the fields of inclusion, social wellbeing and voluntary organisations in Malta and Gozo. Certainly, enough to help us and our dedicated colleagues to look further ahead to more achievements and even better results, meeting – with a sense of justified confidence – the new challenges and the new conditions that inevitably sometimes crop up in a nation's life.

It all goes with that great sense of pride that I feel in serving this sensitive but highly rewarding sector now leaving a tangible mark on our society. Aġenzija Sapport employees come readily to mind every time a project comes to fruition, spotlighting this national effort to right the wrongs of the past and making things happen for the benefit of all those who need help and support for them to integrate in a society happily and readily adjusting to the processes of inclusion and equality. It is why the Government's commitment is to keep on strengthening Aġenzija Sapport in all its aspects, while at the same time focusing on the issue of inclusion within our fast-changing society. So much work has been done and so much work remains to be done.

The Government's commitment to strengthen Aġenzija Sapport is further cemented in Malta's 2021 – 2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons entitled Freedom to Live.

Happily, persons with a disability are in an empowered position today to understand that they should have the right to reach their full potential in life. Long gone are the days when all was left to fate or fortune. Our actions and our targets are in harmony with the realisation that rights are not paper tokens but an assurance based on facts, ideals and solid strategies. Hence, our PSP agreements between eighteen voluntary organisations and Aġenzija Sapport, which should see yet another rejuvenation process in the work that characterises both the organisations and Aġenzija Sapport.

Facing the future is in itself a major challenge, more so in a world caught in a bout of climate change conditions, wars and attrition. Small though we are, we do not live in an oyster, but are part of this fast-moving global village, hit and influenced

by all that happens in its alleyways and streets. This is the mentality we seek to inject in the minds of all those connected with our work as we continue to tread the fields of equality, equity of access and inclusion.

It is why we have embarked on a project that sees a substantial investment in the training of Aġenzija Sapport employees whose dedication is second to none. Updating our tactics and our practices will go a long way towards making future objectives less daunting and certainly more achievable. The same goes for increased investment in infrastructure which is an important part of this whole new, ever-changing scenario that lies ahead of us.

Direct and positive investment produces results, as we saw during the recent Special Olympics Invitational Games when our athletes managed to bag 54 medals in all: including 12 gold, 17 silver and 14 bronze. Certainly not a bad haul after the work and sacrifices of all those involved, from the athletes themselves and their trainers, to officials and representatives of various voluntary organisations and agencies. Bringing about this remarkable transformation is part of that wider concept of change we still aim to achieve.

As we steadfastly focus on the near and distant future, I need, however, to show my gratitude to Ruth Sciberras, outgoing CEO of Aġenzija Sapport, whose devotion to the community of persons with a disability had no bounds. At the same time, I welcome, with much pleasure, Oliver Scicluna back to the fold he knows so well and has been committed to for many years. In just a few months from his appointment as CEO of Aġenzija Sapport, Oliver has typically already put things in motion and I look forward to collaborating with him in this new, exciting phase of our sector.



OLIVER SCICLUNA
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

FOREWORD

It was with great pride that I was chosen to become the new leader at Agenzija Sapport. I have spent considerable time thinking about the Agency and its evolution and about my part in taking it forward and would like to share some of its history and ethos at the beginning of my journey with this Agency.

As a disabled person, I have watched Aġenzija Sapport evolve and grow over the years, and this was especially true when I served as the Commissioner for the Rights of Persons with Disability. The Agency which was formerly part of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, was established with a team of Social Workers, working from the Bugeia Institute in Santa Venera, with the aim of supporting a small group of persons with disabilities. It is important that the difficulties and challenges this original group of Social Workers, are appreciated. In addition to providing support, they were at the forefront of the move to understand the complex needs of persons with disability and the ramifications that the provision of these services should have on the disability sector. It was their understanding and passion for their work, that empowered persons with disability and others to push for improvements in service provision.

Over the last 10 years, the expectations of persons with disability for true and meaningful inclusion in society have grown. They, quite rightly, believe that having a roof over their heads, and access to education and employment is not enough, they need to be empowered to live independently and be able to make their own decisions. Autonomy is crucial and should not be separated from inclusion or accessibility. Persons with disability understand that they should have the right to reach their full potential. In order to meet these expectations, the proper structures and services have had to be put in place. Aġenzija Sapport have introduced many services focused on meeting these needs, whilst at the same time, trying to ensure that these services are provided within the community so that society as a whole also understands that equality and equity of access and inclusion are essential for persons with disabilities.

I have witnessed that the Agency never sleeps, work goes on continuously. This is achieved through the same levels of passion seen in that small group of Social Workers at the Agency's inception, being exhibited in the current employees who strive to enable persons with disability and their families to lead a dignified lifestyle. The work of the Agency 10 years on is far more complex and often difficult to navigate, though this is the nature of the work and something that is understood by the Aġenzija Sapport team. The main aim of Aġenzija Sapport is to effect CHANGE and this only comes through having the passion and commitment to tackle challenges, in order to achieve the CHANGE we believe in. I see my role as one which matches the operations of the Agency to the Agency's philosophy, ensuring that all the employees have a common understanding of what we stand for. We must understand the frustrations faced by persons with disabilities when they face multiple social barriers and be in a position to continuously assess these barriers and develop new, or strengthen existing services to address the issues.

The Agency must work to be sustainable, able to meet the demands of persons with disability and offer good quality services. To achieve this, we will promote a positive working culture and provide opportunities so that the potential of all employees can be used within the Agency. I am very proud to be an employee of Aġenzija Sapport and am looking forward to an exciting and challenging future ahead. I thank all my predecessors and all those who worked hard for the Agency to move forward.



MS RUTH ROSE SCIBERRAS
OUTGOING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

FOREWORD

The challenges we have faced due to COVID-19 during the year under review have affected both our service users and staff. I want to particularly acknowledge, for our service users and their families, the additional stress of navigating a pandemic safely whilst needing to receive essential support services in their homes.

For our staff, the pandemic meant significant and sudden changes in work practices, hours, and at times, intense worrying uncertainty. All of this while we were still striving to provide a sterling service to all our service users. Such challenging situations often adversely impact the most vulnerable in our community, but the unwavering commitment, care and courage shown by families, staff and the Agency's Senior Management Team, have collectively carried us through. The Agency's presentation on the COVID-19 experiences at the National Association of Public Health Medicine Symposium demonstrated an Agency who admirably rose to the challenges of a new and daunting situation by working incessantly to ensure responsive and safe decision-making.

There has been a lot of valuable learning and I believe we have gained many new skills and learned about alternative ways of supporting people, ways that may continue to have relevance or be a preference for some.

In addition to this agility and responsiveness, 2021 was marked with major achievements including:

- Administering a budget of €26,644,443, an increase of €3,377,972 over 2020.
- Covid vaccine roll-out in all our residential homes and community services.
- The Agency was involved in giving feedback on the National Disability Strategy.
- The launch of the first Aġenzija Support Consultative Committee.
- Various agreements (PSPs) with NGOs – Dar il-Kaptan (€4.2 million), Fondazzjoni Arka (€2.1 million),

Fondazzjoni Wens (€2.3 million), Fondazzjoni Nazareth (€2 million), and ALS Malta Foundation (€2.9 million).

- Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta and the Agency, an action research project was carried out, aimed at hearing the voices of persons with disability in order to inform future policy and practice in the area of parenting and disability.
- A renewal of the agreement with Hila Homes Ltd worth €6.7 million for the next three years.
- Other agreements with St Vincent de Paul Long Term Care Facility for Narcis, Clean Malta, Malta Trust Foundation and Special Olympics Malta.
- Investment in new equipment including a new driver test station for the Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre (STILC) with an investment of €30,000.
- Launch of a new project consisting of an accessible recreational area and belvedere at the Mtarfa Day Centre for persons with disabilities.
- Launch of the first phase of the Mtarfa Day Centre project that will allow for the development of more specialised programmes within the Centre. This is a 5-year project on three phases with a total investment of €7 million.
- Launch of Kirkop Residence project with an investment of €1.3 million.
- Continuation of the modernisation exercise of day centres.
- Launch of positive parenting courses for parents of children with disability and the presentation of Certificates of Attendance and Parenting Guide Resource Packs to parents of children with disabilities.



- Launch of a new project on parenting skills and sex education programme for persons with intellectual disabilities, offering them and aspiring parents with information, practical parenting sessions and an individualised programme. A Real Care Baby Simulator were bought with an investment of €9,000.
- Collaboration with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing to carry out a study amongst parents with disability.
- Launch of simplification measures within the disability sector aimed to streamline and avoid repetitive assessment procedures and means testing for persons with Downs' Syndrome.
- Ongoing collaboration with Special Olympics Malta to prepare for the Special Olympics Invitational Games 2022. Aġenzija Sapport employees were also awarded a certification for their participation in the specialised Motor Activity Training Programme (MATP) delivered by Special Olympics Malta professionals.
- Investment in development and restructuring of Community Services, which were also awarded the European Social Services Award for Excellence 2021.
- Employees as at end of December 2021 amounted to 611, including 78 new employees, inclusive of new head count and replacements.
- More investment in Sharing Lives service, which saw the contribution of 33 volunteers through the year under review, reaching 170 service users.
- Investment in training and staff development including specialised international training and conferences. Coordination and delivery of an international online conference on Assistive Technology - Unlocking Potential, focusing on assistive technology solutions and the importance of play for children with disabilities.
- Partnership with Polish organisation Lider to share best practices in the implementation of community-based services.

In addition, I would like to mention that in my capacity both as CEO of Aġenzija Sapport and the Chair of the Positive Parenting Taskforce, an achievement which reached fantastic outcomes was the delivery of the “Breaking the News” programme, through which over 650 professionals were trained on how to deliver negative news with responsibility and sensitivity to parents of newly-born children and the conditions they may have been born with.

None of the above would have been possible without the dedication and unwavering endeavours from the Senior Management Team and the staff, who demonstrated determination and commitment to care on a daily basis.

Aġenzija Sapport will continue to forge ahead, with a commitment to high-quality services that foster a truly inclusive community. With sincere thanks and a genuine appreciation to all of the staff – we truly built relationships that made a difference.

I would also like to thank Hon. Minister Julia Farrugia Portelli for her unwavering support through these challenging times.

SERVICES

SERVICES	NUMBER OF SERVICE USERS
Assessment and Intervention Services	1,640
Day Services	555
Residential Services	80
NGO Services	600
Community Services	136
Independent Community Living Monitoring Services	299
Vehicle Road Licenses Exemption Scheme	439
Vehicle Registration Tax Exemption Scheme	123
Grant on Purchase of Special Equipment	1,015
Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre	292
Positive Parenting	26
Access to Communication & Technology Unit	410
Sharing Lives	170
Sign Language Interpreting Services	81

Table 1: Number of service users who benefitted from Support services in 2021

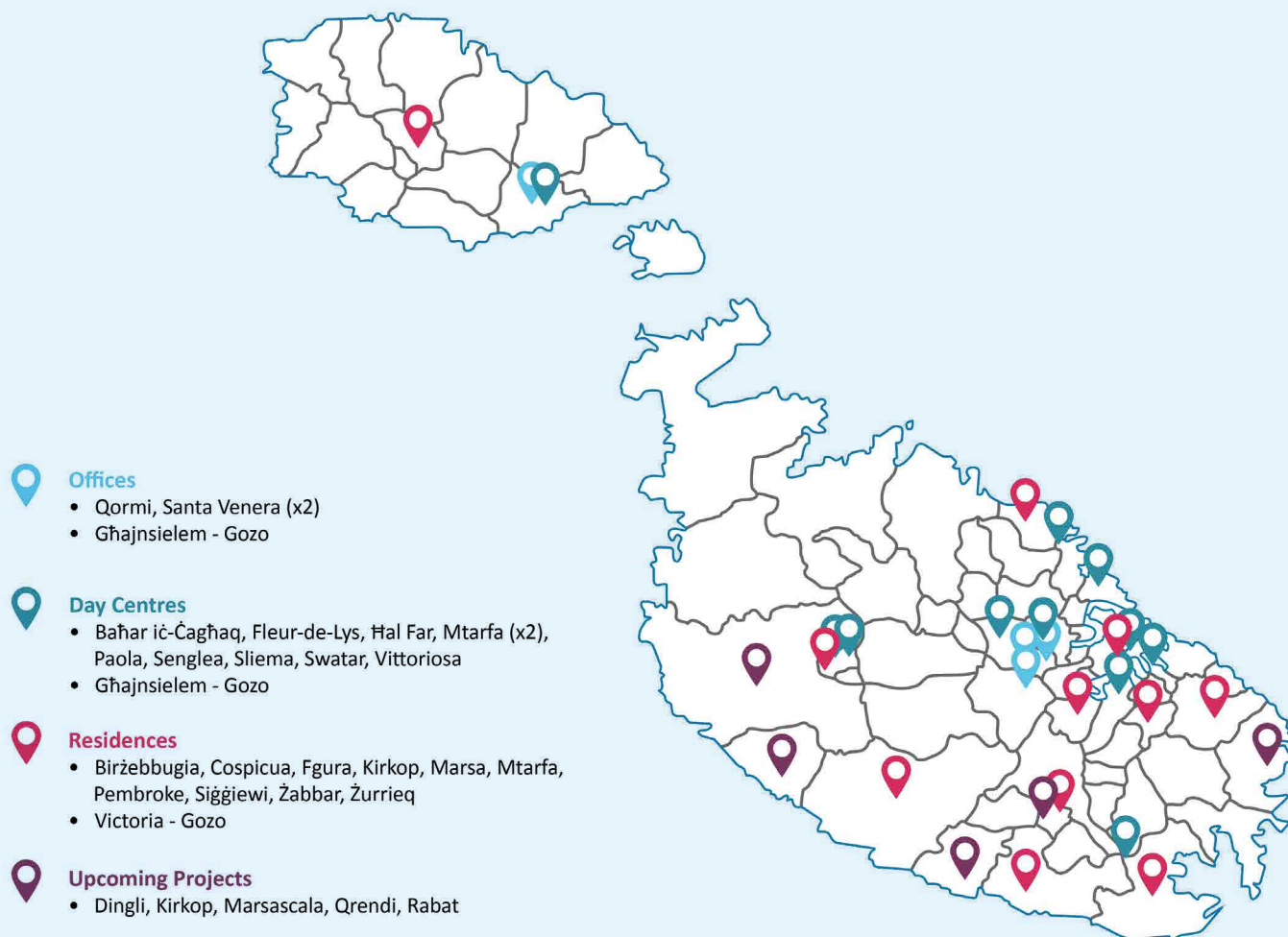


Figure 1: Support premises locations

ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION SERVICES

The Assessment and Intervention (A&I) Team is the primary point of contact within AĠenzija Sappor for potential and existent service users and their relatives. This team follows and screens all intakes received, subsequent to which service users are offered a holistic service according to their individualised needs.

Once a case is allocated, the professional following the case, in collaboration with the service user, constructs an individualised action plan, which plan will enable the service user to reach the felt need. Professionals will assist the service users all the way through the whole process, by liaising with other services and other stakeholders. Once the predetermined goal is reached and the service users' needs are met, the service is terminated. The team highly promotes and values the service users' independence, constantly striving for the service users not to become dependent on the services given to them.

Throughout 2021, the A&I Team experienced an influx in requests for assistance, attributed mostly to the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought forward new realities and uncertainties for most of the Agency's service users, who were facing new challenges such as the absence of services available and the closure of schools.

198 new referrals were
received by the A&I Team
in 2021

1,640 service users were
assisted by the A&I Team
in 2021

To meet the continuous increase in demand for services and keep abreast with current needs throughout 2021, the A&I Team embarked on a transformational journey that brought forward the specialisation of the services offered by the team. Through these changes, the Agency introduced the Young Adults' Team which follows service users between 18-35 years, bringing the total of sub-teams within the A&I Team to three, also including the Children's Team, which follows children from 0-17 years and the Adults' Team, following service users between 35 - 60 years.

Further extensive work was also done on the planning of Siblings Support Groups and Sibshops. These support groups will be launched in 2022. In November, a gathering for past participants of the Siblings Support Groups was held, with the aim of gathering feedback for future support groups. Inter-agency and intra-agency services are of the essence to be able to provide a holistic service to the service users. Such networking is constantly maintained through several meetings and discussions to implement new protocols that further establish such collaboration.

The year 2021 also marked the introduction of the Case Management System (CMS), which is a fully digitalised filing system. The CMS will also facilitate communication between teams and collection of statistics.

Credit to the A&I Team is not only presented through job satisfaction and success stories but in 2021, it also came through the official nomination for 'Most Impactful Service of the year 2020-2021' coordinated by the Malta Association for Social Workers Awards, whilst several team members were also nominated for individual awards.



This event was a showcase of the hardworking team who together make up the A&I Department, professionals who work together for the best interest of the service users.

WAY FORWARD

The plans for the way forward for the A&I Team for the year 2022 include the implementation of:

- Siblings support groups
- The first ever Sibshops sessions
- Support groups for parents
- Planning and finalising sessions for support groups for persons with acquired disability
- Targeting Direct Payment cases on the waiting list
- Improve screening of intake cases
- Blitz Day to screen waiting list
- Finalising the MOU with the Domestic Violence Unit within Aġenzija Appoġġ.

TESTIMONIAL

As proud parents raising twin boys who are on the Autism spectrum, at times as parents we do get mentally tired and physically exhausted in coping with all their daily challenges. We care mostly about our children's wellbeing and do neglect ourselves completely, also affecting our health. There was a time when we felt completely helpless and alone on this journey with a lot of unanswered questions and always worrying about their future. Then we reached out to Aġenzija Support. The A&I Team has been unbelievably helpful and supportive in all aspects, as from day one we felt that they understood our position and are helping by catering for our daily challenges, needs and thoughts and indeed they are making our lives much easier. May God bless them all for what they are doing.

FAMILY FITZGERALD

DAY SERVICES

The aim of the Day Services within Aġenzija Sapport is to deliver programmes to meet the needs of adult service users encompassing independent living, self-advocacy, community inclusion, arts, music, sexuality and general knowledge.

The year 2021 was definitely the year of new initiatives and collaborations. Despite the limitations brought upon the service by the COVID-19 pandemic, the respective day centres strived to look into new initiatives and collaborations, and management liaised with different entities to bring new opportunities to service users. Constant efforts were done to improve the quality of the service, to further support employees through training, staff development and supervision, to strengthen the administrative matters and to upgrade the physical environments in line with emerging needs.

During the period under review, case reviews were conducted for attending service users in order to review the individual support plans of the service users. Some centres also conducted meetings with the families of service users to get their feedback on the service. Additionally, three centres were chosen to participate in a pilot study to have the first Service User Council within Day Services.

More than 80 individual feedback sessions were held within day centres, including SPERO, to get feedback directly from the service users. An easy-to-read version of the feedback questionnaire was also finalised in order to reach more service users in the coming year.

During 2021, Day Services expanded the variety of programmes being delivered within the centres, through the introduction of MATP sessions, bocce, swimming, SAFER course, visits to Esplora Interactive Science Centre, online sessions between centres, and the running of a tuck shop in Hal Far and Gozo Day Centres. The Numeracy and Literacy Programme continued through detailed assessments of potential participants, training for staff and the initiation of the job-shadowing phase. A treasure hunt and an online Christmas gathering were organised among all the centres, whilst each centre organised its own yearly events. During the festive season, Christmas markets were held at Fleur-de-Lys and Sliema Day Centres, a gala night was organised in Gozo, a Christmas gift exchange between centers was coordinated and Secret Santa activity for service users was held in some centres. An ice-cream day was held in Hal Far, a Valentine's lunch was organised at Mtarfa Resource Centre and a staycation in Gozo was organised by Mtarfa Day Centre. Several activities in relation to prominent days such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Pink October, Halloween and Christmas were also held.

The respective centres organised several community outings, according to the preferences of the service users involved. Throughout 2021, centres looked into ways of collaborating with other entities in order to promote the concept of active citizenship and community inclusion. Service users at Cottonera and Hal Far started voluntary work at a cat sanctuary. Hal Far, Cottonera and Paola Day Centres also did voluntary work with Id-Dar tal-Providenza by helping in preparing 2022 diaries. Baħar iċ-Ċaġħaq Day Centre initiated a tennis programme at Vittoriosa Lions Tennis Club, equine therapy at Bidnija Horse Riding and exploring

555 service users made use of
Day Services during 2021



the possibility of having training on permaculture. Mtarfa Resource Centre nominated a service user to follow training related to manning of the Mtarfa clock. Hal Far Day Centre also explored outwork opportunities. The day centre in Gozo participated in voluntary activities, as well as collaborated with Għaqda Hbieb tal-Presepu Għawdex Sezzjoni Għajnsielem, through the manning of a stand during their crib exhibition.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led Day Services to evolve its way of operating towards innovative methods. Since 2020, Day Services has moved beyond just offering its services within the physical day centres to the concept of a hybrid service to cater for those service users who decided not to or could not attend physically due to their vulnerability.

This marked the most significant change to the delivery of services. Such sessions were composed of individual and group online sessions, joint sessions between different centres, phone calls and video calls. Individual and group online sessions are offered to service users who show interest and have the resources and skills to join from home. These sessions are a remote continuation of the programmes offered in the centre, such as cooking, hair care, independent living, advocacy, Information Technology (IT) skills, culture and music sessions. An inter-ministerial initiative was also taken to provide tablets and internet service to service users who did not have the physical resources to access this online service. Where service users did not have the necessary technology skills or were not interested to follow such sessions, phone calls and video calls were offered to ensure continuous monitoring and social contact.

The hybrid service also incorporated community-based activities. Service users who had sensitive situations at home or could not attend physically at the centre are being identified continuously and are being offered individual outings within the community.

These outings aim to allow for the continuation of service as much as possible, keeping in line with the Individual Support



Plan (ISP) goals of the particular person. Outings varied from walks, to attendance for swimming and bocce training sessions in preparation for Special Olympics Invitational Games 2020, to independent living sessions. This service was targeted to those with the highest priorities.

Day Services also took care of the logistics in relation to the COVID-19 vaccination programme for all its service users and staff during 2021.

Day Services are also committed to monitor the applicants on the various waiting lists, as their situations may vary whilst they are waiting for a service. The introduction of a prioritisation checklist led to analyse better the urgency of each applicant and to identify situations which need prompt attention. In order to continue addressing the waiting lists, back-to-back agreements and terminations of service users who no longer required Day Services were done. A project brief was presented in relation to a specialised day centre for the elderly in order to try to accommodate more applicants from the waiting list, as well as several proposals for new day centres in various localities.

An exercise was also conducted in collaboration with Human Resources (HR) Department in which an individual meeting was held with each staff to look into the personal experience of working within Day Services. This exercise proved beneficial in identifying and tackling issues, give more voice

30 new service users started attending Day Services in 2021

to our staff and working on suggestions brought forward by staff themselves. 870 staff supervision sessions were held within Day Services in 2021.

Throughout 2021, Day Services in collaboration with the Projects Department, continued working on improving the physical environments of all day centres, in line with the latest Health and Safety guidelines. 2021 saw the initiation of the extension project at Mtarfa Day Centre, the installation of several new bathrooms, ceiling hoists and air-conditioners within several centres, as well as the installation of fire alarms in all centres. Significant works included:

- Sensory garden, railings in front garden and room refurbishments at Bahar iċ-Ċaġhaq Day Centre.
- Fire doors at Swatar Resource Centre.
- Quiet room, doors installation and intercom system at Mtarfa Resource Centre.
- Outdoor area embellishment at Mtarfa Day Centre.
- Upgrading of back wing and independent living unit at Hal Far Day Centre.
- Outdoor lighting and bocce courts at Fleur-de-Lys Day Centre.
- Installation of two reception areas at Ġhajnsielem Learning Hub.

Day Services invested a lot of effort into building bridges with different entities to increase the opportunities for service users. During 2021, various collaborations were set, including:

- Aġenzija Żgħażaġh – SAFER course
- Special Olympics Malta – bocce training, swimming training and MATP training

- Aġenzija Sedqa – training to staff
- Animal sanctuaries – voluntary work
- Inspire Foundation – swimming sessions
- Vittoriosa Lions Tennis Club – tennis sessions
- Esplora Interactive Science Centre – visits for all service users
- Depiro Basketball Club – use of premises
- Bidnija Horse Riding – equine therapy sessions
- Għaqda Hbieb tal-Presepu Għawdex Sezzjoni Għajnsielem – participation in crib exhibition
- Cleansing and Maintenance Division – upgrading of premises

Day Services also started working on potential networking with the Institute of Tourism Studies, Opening Doors and Lifelong Learning Department to continue expanding networking potential.

For another year, Day Services constantly worked toward improving the experience of service users and their families, through all possible means. The passion and efforts of the whole team were crucial to reaching new heights and 2021 has rewarded the team with the First Runner-Up position in the EPALE Awards. This achievement encourages Day Services to keep striving towards quality and excellence.

45 service users from Day Services will be taking part in the Special Olympics Invitational Games in May 2022

Day Services –
First Runner-Up in the
Electronic Platform for Adult
Learning in Europe (EPALE)
Awards 2021 coordinated
by the Directorate for
Research, Lifelong Learning &
Employability within the Ministry
for Education

TESTIMONIAL

I attend the Gozo Day Centre as I enjoy learning new things and making friends. I enjoy all activities but mostly cooking, diamond painting, dancing sessions, go on outings and going to Marsalforn for a swim. I also enjoyed going to Malta for an outing. I would love to spend a weekend break in Malta or go to Sicily!

SERVICE USER

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Support Residential Services are aimed at providing a residential option to minors and adults with a disability, who for one reason or another, cannot continue living within their own home or with their own family. Such residential support is provided within small and personalised apartments or houses, with the residents being provided with the necessary assistance on a 24/7 basis.

The main aim for the residential services is to enable the person with disability to live as independently as possible within the community. The philosophy of the service is that of focusing on developing the service user's abilities through support rather than care.

During 2021, one of the residences was selected to be part of a pilot project whereby the service users were encouraged to become more self-sufficient and therefore enhance their potential to be able to live more independently within the community. The said residence, which is the home of three service users, usually had 24/7 support as per the other residences. However, after the service users were provided with the necessary skills needed to live independently, the support to this residence was reduced, thus allowing the service users to have more choices and make their own decisions.

Currently Aġenzija Sappor operates 10 residences in Malta and one in Gozo.

Each residence has a team of Support Workers, who are the frontliners and have a key role in assisting the service users



Number of service users
within residential services
as at end 2021: **80**



with various aspects of their lives and to ensure that they are fully participating and included in the community. All Support Workers are followed, monitored and supported by a Leader, a Support Executive and Senior Support Workers, who also have a crucial role in the overall service provision.

In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Residential Services continued to adapt service provision to meet the encountered challenges. One of the measures adopted was to introduce a live-in system whereby a number of Support Workers lived in the residence for an average period of two weeks. This was done to limit spreading of the virus and thus protect the service users. When the cases of COVID-19 decreased, the residential services resumed normal service provision and the service started to refocus once more on community integration.

TESTIMONIAL

I have been residing at Dar Iris in Żabbar for over two years. For me, it was a drastic change, but with the help and care of the Support Workers along with the professionals involved, I managed to adapt in my new home in a very short time. At Dar Iris, we have the chance to make our own choices and decisions, such as where we go for outings and the planning of our weekly menu.

Throughout the week, I enjoy attending Skills Space at Sliema where I have the opportunity to involve myself in various activities and spend time with my friends. In the afternoon, I go on errands with Support Workers such as grocery shopping. Later, we eat all together and then help in tidying up. In my free time, I enjoy listening to music.

I am grateful I live at Dar Iris as I feel included and Support Workers are there to help, listen and guide me to make responsible choices.'

***MARCELLE, SERVICE USER**

** name has been changed*

NGO AGREEMENTS SERVICE

In concurrence to the mission and vision of the Agency, the line Ministry, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Aġenzija Sapport have been working in collaboration to offer respite, residential and day services to persons with a disability through Public Social Partnership (PSP) agreements.

The NGO Department of Aġenzija Sapport was established in 2017 and is now responsible for the monitoring of 18 PSP contracts including residential homes, an independent living home, day services and respite services.

PSP AGREEMENT	SERVICE PROVIDER	NUMBER OF SERVICE USERS COVERED WITH THE PSPs IN 2021
Dar l-Arcipriet Degabriele	Fondazzjoni Nazareth	10 residents
Dar Madre Tereza	Fondazzjoni Nazareth	9 residents
Dar Nazareth	Fondazzjoni Nazareth	10 residents
Dar il-Wens	Fondazzjoni Wens	18 residents
Dar l-Abbiltà	Fondazzjoni Wens	3 residents
Dar Merħba	Fondazzjoni Wens	14 residents
Dar Arka	Fondazzjoni Arka	11 residents + 1 (respite bed)
Dar il-Ġublew tal-Hniena	Fondazzjoni Arka	5 residents
Dar Madonna ta' Pinu	Fondazzjoni Arka	5 residents
Akkwarell	Dar tal-Providenza	3 residents
Dar Pirotta	Dar tal-Providenza	10 residents
Dar Shalom	Dar tal-Providenza	5 residents
Dar Bjorn	ALS Malta Foundation	13 residents
Fondazzjoni Hajja Indipendenti	Fondazzjoni Hajja Indipendenti	1 resident
Dar il-Kaptan Respite	Dar il-Kaptan	205 service users
Dar il-Kaptan Day Programme	Dar il-Kaptan	15 service users
Malta Autism Centre		40 service users
Casa Apap Bologna	HILA Homes Limited	214 service users

Table 2: NGOs and service users followed by Sapport NGO Department in 2021

The NGO Department is also responsible for:

- Monitoring the levels of support that is provided to service users within these residences and services.
- Processing and verifying NGO financial invoices for governmental funding.
- Following all referrals of new service users for admission within NGO services.
- Holding yearly case reviews of all service users falling under PSP agreements.

Most of the above-mentioned PSPs were amended and renewed in 2021, thus streamlining and ensuring a more standardised service across the entities and also reaching more service users.

The NGO Team is also in charge of evaluating all new potential individuals who are eligible to make use of respite services, establishing the level of support required, monitoring service delivery, and handling financial invoices.

During the period under review, the NGO Team introduced a systematic exercise whereby a feedback sheet was formulated in light to evaluate current PSPs and receive feedback from individuals who make use of these services. This will then develop into collating all feedback received with an intensive exercise planned for 2022, whereby such feedback will be thoroughly scrutinised, following which the team will adopt the recommendations drawn from the feedback received.

WAY FORWARD

Besides continuing to ensure that service users are provided with the set care plans and quality services by NGOs, the NGO Department will also be furthering such collaboration with signing of more PSP agreements in 2022. The exercise of collecting and collating annual feedback from all service users benefitting from these PSPs will also continue.

TESTIMONIALS

I am very happy here. My sister works and my mother has her mind at rest that I am well cared for here. We eat well and we go out a lot. I enjoy it with my friends, we laugh a lot and play Maltese songs. I also like writing.

CHRISTINE MUSCAT,
RESIDENT AT DAR MADRE TEREZA

I would like to express my gratitude for the help, dedication and professional service of all the staff who work at respite homes. I have nothing but immense gratitude for the way they treat my brother during his short stays at the homes. Each one of the carers contribute in a unique way to bring smiles in the lives of others. It is extremely helpful for me to be able to have some rest. Well done to all. Keep it up!

YVETTE, SISTER OF
RESPITE SERVICES CLIENT

COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Community Services offered by Aġenzija Sappport are one of the pivotal services where community living is encouraged and supported in order to enable and empower persons with disability to continue living independently in their setting, when the situation allows it.

These services facilitate this by supporting people with disabilities in Malta and Gozo to continue developing their potential. Such personalised service targets a variety of needs, which are expressed, communicated and experienced by the individuals themselves and/or their family / caregivers and the professionals involved.

Community Services work hand-in-hand with the A&I Team and other professionals involved in the service users' life. Social Workers from the A&I Team assess individuals who require Community Services and need closer monitoring due to their social issues. Eligible individuals are assisted by the Community Services Support Workers aiming to gain and/or enhance daily living skills to promote active participation and independence in the community.

During the period under review, Community Services were detached from the other Agency Allocation Boards and started accepting referrals directly the A&I Team.

The team offers an average
of **740** hours of service
per week

136 service users benefitted
from Community Services
in 2021



2021 EUROPEAN SOCIAL SERVICES AWARDS

European Social Services Awards

WINNER - SOCIAL SERVICES EXCELLENCE

Aġenzija Sappport
Community Services Team
Aġenzija Sappport Malta



The new system of operating involves discussing the referred cases between professionals of both services where a decision is taken on whether the case should be given by the Community Services or referred to other existing schemes, ensuring that the individual is adequately assisted according to their ISP.

The team participates in case reviews and case conferences organised by professionals both within and outside the Agency, and act according to the decided plan of action. Professionals working within the service were also provided with various training sessions including Supervision training, to equip them with skills to provide the monthly supervision sessions or any other support the Support Workers would require. Other training attended by Community Services staff included:

- Non-Abusive Psychological and Physical Intervention (NAPPI UK)
- Moving and Handling



- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)
- Applying Sensory Integration
- Għaqal id-Dar, Hajja Ahjar

Throughout 2021, the Community Services embarked on a pilot project where two small venues were being utilised as hubs to carry out certain interventions and individual programmes. Such interventions were successful, with over 200 interventions carried out. These hubs gave more space to service users to be in a position to work on their skills and gain new abilities. Community individual programmes consist of personal assistance, community access and daily independent living skills. These programmes require different professionals to work closely together and work towards the targeted aims.

Another initiative taken on by the Community Services during the year 2021, was that of joining with Sharing Lives



under the same management. Such collaboration is to open a wider level of opportunities for the service users.

During the year under review, Community Services were also the major target of interest for a Polish social welfare organisation which coordinated the Plaster project, a Pathways of Cooperation programme under the European Cohesion Fund, focusing on personal assistance and community-based services. As part of this partnership, various meetings and a 2-day bilateral exchange programme were coordinated.

Other highlights for the Community Services in 2021 were the shortlisting of the service for the EPALE Awards in the category of Lifelong Learning Projects, coordinated by the Ministry for Education. Community Services ended the year on a big note when it won the Excellence in Social Services Award and was also a shortlisted nominee for the Outstanding Team Award, both coordinated by the European Social Network (ESN).

WAY FORWARD

The Community Services constitute a dynamic, pivotal service and thus it never stops to grow and evolve. As a way forward, the Community Team will work on consolidating on what it has owned for a long time, providing a good quality support system to the service users. This will also involve further consolidation of the work with other professionals and offer joint interventions. Support Workers' wellbeing and growth is also vital, whilst continuing to invest in attaining the goals discussed and planned between professionals, Support Workers and service users themselves.



EPALE AWARDS 2021

Celebrating Adult Learning in Malta

Introducing the Nominees!

Competing in the Lifelong Learning Project Category:
**Community Services, represented by
Ms Lorraine Polidano**

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION

TESTIMONIALS

I've been working with Aġenzija Sapport for the last year and it was one of the best decisions I made in my life. The Agency does not only give the opportunity to the service users to live a more independent life but also gives us opportunities to grow our knowledge in the field by attending courses and training. I work in the Community Services sector where us, Support Workers, along with other professionals such as Social Workers, Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists, promote independence to our service users that live in the community to have a more independent life and be more active in our society. We help our service users to learn daily independent skills through different aspects according to their abilities.

**RIVA SCICLUNA,
SUPPORT WORKER**

My daughter has been using the Community Services for the last few years. It helps her meet with new people and integrate more in society. She is very happy with what Aġenzija Sapport offers during the service as they try to make different activities based on learning new skills for daily interventions, planned according to her abilities and likes. They also help her and us as parents regarding her health issues by being available to attend medical appointments, and also build on the therapy provided by other professionals such as Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists. It makes us happy seeing our daughter benefitting from these services and also being happy and looking forward for each session.

PARENT

My experience with Aġenzija Sapport as a Support Worker within the Community Services is very exciting. The role within this service makes you challenge your skills and thus improve them, whilst learning new ones. As a result, this job challenged me in very good ways and helped me in becoming more efficient and understanding. This career also provided me with the opportunity to not only meet the service users on a regular basis, but to also understand and support them in different ways. Considering the nature of the cases we work with, as Support Workers we are the frontliners and thus observe progress and challenges, which we would then forward to the different professionals. We are also constantly provided with feedback about the way forward in our work. As a result, the support and assistance provided by the team of professionals is essential. Our wellbeing is also looked after by constant follow-ups, training opportunities, unit days and the monthly supervision. One of the major aims behind our job is to support the service user in reaching his/her goals to be independent by providing them support and aid where it is needed depending on the individual's needs. This is done through a multidisciplinary effort, together with the service user, as evaluation and discussions are held collectively.

KYLE GREENGRASS, SUPPORT WORKER

INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY LIVING MONITORING SERVICE

The highlight of the Independent Community Living Monitoring (ICLM) Service during the year under review was the restructuring and amalgamation of the ICLM Board, getting together the Direct Payment, Independent Community Living and Personal Assistant Funds.

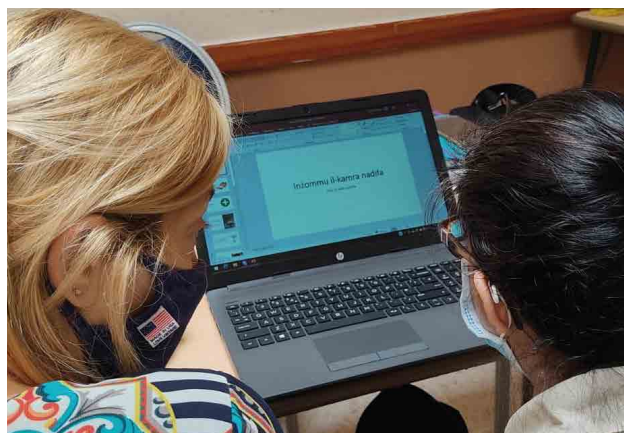
The above exercise signified that all ICLM-related information is now processed and gathered through the same office and that there is a key person with whom several professionals may liaise to ensure the smooth running of the Board and claim processes.

The ICLM Team processed an average of **300** claims for funding by existing service users per month in 2021

The aim of the integration of the three Boards into one led to more efficient and balanced decisions due to a more holistic picture of the service user being presented to the Board. This also resulted in smoother transitions for service users who use different schemes due to increased or reduced needs.

Further achievements of the ICLM service during the period under review include the development and redefinition of its main remits. Some initiatives include:

- Monitoring of the situation of persons who receive financial subsidy to buy hours of personal assistance.
- An in-depth assessment aimed to shorten the application process and waiting time, and which is more in line with the residential, NGO and respite services assessments.





- Referring service users to other services such as Housing Authority, Food Bank, etc.
- Advocating for the service users whereby professions collaborate and support the service users in a diversity of situations including hospital appointments / reviews, educational plans, etc.
- Board presentations for Independent Community Living and Personal Assistant Fund service users are held on a yearly basis whereby re-evaluation of the situation is held by the Board with the help of professional representation.
- The professionals of the ICLM Team have also taken the initiative to send birthday cards produced by the service users attending day centres to ICLM service users thus showing the holistic and individualistic manner of their works. This has been very well received.
- Visits and support sessions with the service users are coordinated according to need in a variety of locations targeting individuals presenting challenges to enhance independent living.



	DIRECT PAYMENT	INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY LIVING	PERSONAL ASSISTANT FUND	TOTALS
Total number of service users availing themselves from funds through respective scheme	85	134	80	299
New service users (out of total number of beneficiaries) who started receiving new funding	15	14	9	38
Utilised funds	€1,145,407		€1,249,763	€2,395,170

Table 3: ICLM service in 2021

TESTIMONIAL

“

My son Emanuel is 23 years old. He is quite independent in some spheres of life, but requires supervision, guidance, monitoring and help in others. There came a time when I needed assistance to be able to care for him well. This is when I contacted Agenzija Sapport. Their response was immediate, and a Social Worker was assigned to assess our case. In a few weeks, after an interview and meeting, Agenzija Sapport approved financing for a care worker's salary which I could never afford. This was a turning point in our lives, everything changed for the better. The care worker showed that she is dedicated, trustworthy and loving towards Emanuel. She sees to his hygiene needs, food, clothes, wellbeing, patiently teaching him new skills, accompanying him on shopping, church and outings. This service has drastically improved Emanuel's life and he is a more accomplished person, happier, healthier and more independent. We have meetings every month with a Support Executive, where we discuss Emanuel's progress and needs while sharing ideas and suggestions, involving Emanuel as much as possible, and plan future actions we must take for his benefit and wellbeing. I would like to thank all the staff of Agenzija Sapport for their dedication and professional help. Their commitment, advice and guidance gives us the opportunity of equality, dignity and fulfilment in life.

RAY, PARENT

”

PEOPLE ASSISTANCE SCHEMES

The People Assistance Schemes (PAS) Service incorporates three main schemes:

1. The Empowerment Scheme
2. Vehicle Road Licence Exemption Scheme
3. Vehicle Registration Tax Exemption Scheme

The PAS Team also works in liaison with the Office of the Commissioner for Revenue with regards to the Grant on the Purchase of Special Equipment scheme, whereby this office assist those applicants who want to apply for this scheme but are unable to post their application online.

2021 was marked with various changes and developments in these schemes, for the benefit of the applicants:

- The request for copies of income documents of the applicants was removed from the list of required documents of all applications of these schemes.
- Digitalisation process was initiated on various aspects of the applications of these schemes. This includes the scanning and storage processes of applications and/or files related to applications and the enhancement of the online applications introducing the e-id aspect.
- A series of meetings were also held to upgrade the online application.
- Proposed amendments in the Vehicle Exemption Schemes were put forward to the Chairperson of these schemes at the Ministry of Finance and Employment. Various meetings and discussions were held on the matter, and such amendments were approved in the Budget for year 2022.

EMPOWERMENT SCHEME

The Empowerment Scheme provides financial support and guidance to persons with disability enabling them to purchase equipment which would allow them to lead a more

independent life. The Scheme is run by an independent Board. The Empowerment Scheme also offers subsidy on individualised transport services to persons with disability who would need to go to work, to a post-secondary education institution, or attend sports activities.

Total number of applicants	1,034
Total number of cases approved	1,015
Total amount approved by Board	€465,120
Total amount claimed	€459,124

Table 4: Empowerment Scheme applications and funds, 2021

VEHICLE ROAD LICENSE EXEMPTION SCHEME

The Vehicle Road License Exemption scheme allows people with disability or their parents / carers to be either partially or fully exempted from paying the annual road license, depending on the age of the vehicle.

439 – number of approved applications out of 453 submissions in 2021



VEHICLE REGISTRATION TAX EXEMPTION SCHEME

The aim of this scheme is to provide support and financial assistance to persons with disability and their families to acquire a means of transportation suitable for their needs.

123 applications processed
in 2021

SONIA TANTI INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTRE

The Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre (STILC) provides information, guidance and assessment by professionals to persons with disability and their families to lead an independent life within the community through the use of mobility equipment, assistive devices and/or training.

The services offered include wheelchair and seating assessments, driving assessments, car adaptations and driving simulation. Persons with disability are also able to receive driving lessons using a modified car, through the Adaptive Driving Motoring School.

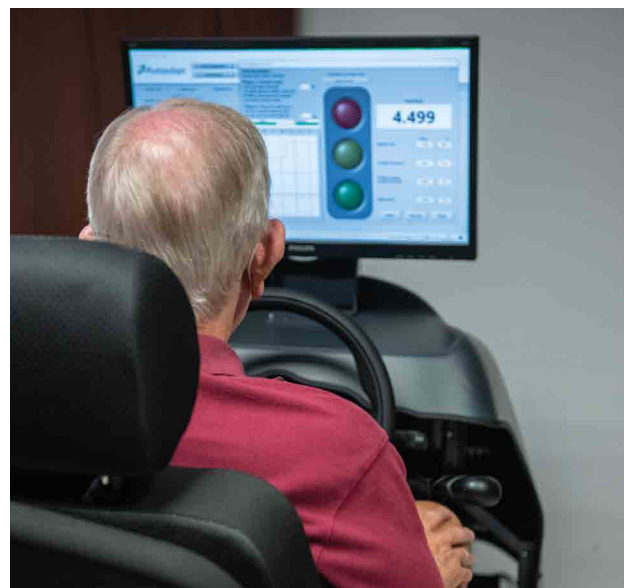
During the period under review, STILC continued to consolidate and strengthen the service delivery to the service users through training sessions to professionals, enhanced administrative processes, human resources and financial investment in order to ensure an improved service. The number of service users and appointments continued to increase on those reported for 2020.

In July 2021, the STILC services received the delivery of a new driver test station. This allowed the Occupational Therapists (OTs) assessing the service users referred to the driving clinic to derive more objective results. The service is now equipped with the latest technology to offer a cutting edge service and hence be able to make the most accurate recommendations that reflect the service users' needs. Training was also offered to the OTs on the clinical use of the driver test station so that its optimal benefits are achieved.

The STILC services were once again re-evaluated so that areas for improvement were identified, which changes were

then reflected in an updated Manual of Procedures (MOP), offering standardised guidelines for the service provision. The working relationship with Allied Health was further enhanced through meetings and discussions. Through a collaborative approach, training on Pressure Mapping, driving instruction for persons with disabilities, and using the driving test station with service users, was provided to the professionals providing their services at STILC.

A number of other information sessions were organised throughout the year with the aim of enhancing product knowledge to the team. This is an important aspect for the clinical work as holistic and informed recommendations



292 service users benefitted
from STILC services in 2021

477 appointments were carried out by STILC Team in 2021



can be prescribed to the service users, allowing them to maintain and improve their independent living. The service has also invested in the latest version of the Stroke Drivers' Assessment Tool for the driving clinic, which is used for specific assessments with persons who suffer a stroke.

During the year 2021, further collaboration took place with Ottobock, an international company that provides fully-customised wheelchairs with contoured seating for persons with disability. Such collaboration benefits Maltese families who require such a highly specialised service.

Due to COVID-19 mitigation measures, STILC services also offered a hybrid option for service delivery to service users whereby it became possible to allow them to attend for their review appointments online instead of in-person. This ensured the safety and wellbeing of the service users as well reducing the need for unnecessary commuting to the STILC premises. This model of service delivery is planned to continue as it was well received by the service users.

A number of students on placement were also accommodated at the STILC services. This allows the STILC Team to promote the department's work to students and prospective employees



while strengthening the Agency's collaboration with different educational entities.

Towards the last quarter of the year 2021, work initiated on the introduction of a CMS. This will allow for a streamlined system of maintaining service users' records with controlled access to uphold data protection. This system will also ensure that records are accessible to approved professionals in a timely manner and therefore continuation of service can be maintained throughout.

POSITIVE PARENTING

During the year 2021 Aġenzija Sapport introduced the Positive Parenting Services. This followed a research project in collaboration with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing within the University of Malta. This research study along with the Positive Parenting National Strategic Policy 2016 - 2024 guided the development process of this new service.

The National Strategy refers to Aġenzija Sapport and its obligations to offer positive parenting services in the disability sector.

The Positive Parenting Services offer two main programmes:

- Positive parenting programme for parents of children with disability.
- A parenting skills programme for parents with an intellectual disability.

POSITIVE PARENTING SERVICE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

During the year 2021 a feedback exercise was carried out amongst parents of children with a disability to collate information about their preferences for the positive parenting

groups. The main objective of these groups is that of guiding parents and supporting them to empower their children to be more independent. The groups also focus on fostering an open relationship with children, taking care of ourselves as parents, methods of positive discipline and enhancing a culture and mindset of independence.

Two online groups were delivered on a weekly basis to a total of 26 parents. Seven sessions of two hours each were delivered to each group. Based on the success with which these groups were received, it is being planned that such groups will be run throughout the year 2022. Individual parent coaching is also being offered to those parents who would need more individualised and in-depth coaching.

Aġenzija Sapport Positive Parenting Skills Courses for Parents of Children with Disability

- 7 sessions of 2 hours
- Once a week
- Attendance for these groups is free of charge



A PARENTING SKILLS PROGRAMME FOR PARENTS WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

The parenting skills programme is aimed at parents or aspiring parents who have an intellectual disability. During 2021, three training programmes for professionals were delivered as part of the Agency's commitment to provide these services. A group of six professionals travelled to the UK whereby they received training on assessing and working with parents or aspiring parents with intellectual disability. The Agency also hosted an internationally acclaimed expert from Canada, Professor Maurice Feldman, who provided training on the Step by Step Programme, which is an evidence-based positive parenting programme for parents with intellectual disabilities. The Real Care Baby Simulator was purchased as part of the resources which will be used with these service users. This was further sustained with technical training given to Support professionals on the use of the simulator.

Individual parenting assessments and parent coaching sessions are being planned to take place in the year 2022 as part of the service's effort to consolidate and actively embark on direct parent coaching with service users.

26 parents attended positive parenting sessions in 2021

TESTIMONIAL

This was actually the first time whereby we are being guided on how to become better parents... rather than being told what our children cannot do.

PARENT



ACCESS TO COMMUNICATION & TECHNOLOGY UNIT

The Access to Communication & Technology Unit (ACTU) offers Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT) services. The aim of these services is to provide clinical assessment, recommendations, support at initial implementation, as well as technical and training support for communication aids.

These services are offered to individuals with complex communication needs, physical and/or sensory difficulties, speech, language and communication needs and/or learning disabilities, and their families.

During the period under review, ACTU offered a pilot project that was initiated in November 2020, the Information Day service. This service aims to provide one-off consultation sessions to therapists and their clients who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the full ACTU service but require advice on AAC or EAT needs. This service also allows professionals to view equipment / software or discuss AAC or EAT. This pilot project was evaluated and changes to improve the service will be implemented in 2022.

Throughout 2021, assessments were done in-person with the service users and their family, whilst support sessions were done via video-conferencing. This enabled ACTU to continue providing a quality service during the COVID-19 situation.

During the year 2021, the service continued to expand its inventory of devices to use during assessments of service



users with an investment of €30,000. These new devices will allow a more holistic and comprehensive assessment service and addressing all of the service users' needs.

Training is an important aspect of ACTU. Apart from reaching various professionals and parents through local webinars, the team also engaged a number of foreign experts for its yearly conference, with the main theme being "Assistive Technology: Unlocking Potential".

Bespoke training was also designed and delivered to San Miguel Resource Centre and Guardian Angel Resource Centre to further support the educators in implementing AAC and assistive technology to support literacy. Other training sessions also reached local NGOs and primary schools in Malta and Gozo, including specialised training to

25 appointments for the
Information Day service were
conducted by ACTU in 2021



3 webinars and 1 international online conference were coordinated and delivered by ACTU Team in 2021

Learning Support Educators (LSEs) in Church schools as part of their training in teaching digital skills to their students.

ACTU therapists also represent the Agency on the Person-Centred Technology Members' Forum within the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), of which Aġenzija Sapport is a member. This involvement puts the ACTU service on the list of best practice models in the field of assistive technology on an international level. Through this active role, an ACTU therapist edited and co-authored the EASPD Person-Centred Technology Policy Paper. This international collaboration also led to a study visit hosted by Aġenzija Sapport of six representatives from international organisations coming from Italy, Belgium, Greece and Hungary, in collaboration with EASPD.

On a national level, other important collaborations also include that with other professionals and stakeholders both intra-agency and from other entities. The ongoing alliance with the Malta Trust Foundation which funds AAC / EAT solutions to children with communication difficulties is a valued relationship that benefits a number of service users and their family members. ACTU therapists provide continuous support in assessing, customising and implementing this technology. Other important collaborations include those with different suppliers and also that with the Association of Speech and Language Pathologists in the development of a new Maltese language AAC app.

WAY FORWARD

Besides increasing team capacity and continuing offering a service of excellence, ACTU will continue to represent Aġenzija Sapport on national and international fora. Training remains a high priority where the team shares expertise with other professionals, students and parents, together with staying updated with knowledge on new equipment and assessments and interventions in the field of AAC/EAT.

410 service users benefitted from ACTU services in 2021

A total of **1,055** appointments were carried out by ACTU therapists in 2021

SHARING LIVES

Sharing Lives was launched in April 2017, and since then, the service has worked continuously to create new initiatives for people with disability to have greater access to leisure and formative activities in the community and opportunities for socialisation.

The service offers service users the possibility to have social contact, engage in group activities with their peers and participate in cultural, sports and other non-formal educational programmes. Sharing Lives is led by the belief that people with disability have a right to live a full life.

As the COVID-19 pandemic ensued in 2021, the team continued to offer several online activities. Sharing Lives also hosted a successful online party called Dance All Night with around 25 people attending, where a committee composed of people with disability organised the online party and implemented their ideas with the support of professionals and volunteers. As soon as national measures eased, face-to-face activities were organised whilst applying several procedures to ensure social distancing, including small group outings. Social contact continued to be offered online until the volunteers and service users could meet in person.

Sharing Lives received a total of 87 new referrals during 2021, coming mostly from other Agency departments, other organisations and also self-referrals. This number almost

tripled from the previous year. Assessments of new referrals are carried out by the designated Social Worker within the team.

Besides the varied activities and formative initiatives organised throughout the period under review, a pilot project Ghaqal id-Dar, Hajja Ahjar was also conducted in collaboration with the Home Economics Association, where a number of service users attended a short course focusing on independent living skills. Another milestone and a first for this service, was the initiation of a youth group, giving the opportunity to service users to meet on a weekly basis. Further collaborations include that with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, offering regular creative and formative workshops including use of social media and photography. Other internal collaborations were formed with the Agency's Community Services where joint activities were embarked on thus, in turn, increasing socialisation opportunities to Community Services service users.

170 service users benefitted
from Sharing Lives in 2021

116 activities were
organised throughout
2021





33 volunteers gave service
to Sharing Lives in 2021



Volunteers are an integral part of Sharing Lives. Volunteers come from all walks of life including young students, foreign volunteers, professionals and pensioners. During 2021, the team also hosted two Youth Work students on placement and another two Erasmus+ students on internship. To reach out to more volunteers, Sharing Lives also submitted a Quality Label application. This will make it possible for Aġenzija Sapport to recruit at least two volunteers on a long-term basis through the European Solidarity Corps programme.

WAY FORWARD

Data continues to show that Sharing Lives is in demand mostly amongst young people. 72% out of 170 service users eligible for Sharing Lives are young people under the age of 35 years. This trend seems to persist with a slight increase from the previous years. The youth group has been a successful way for young people to have regular sources to socialise with their peers, access leisure activities and attend formative

sessions. Nonetheless, more initiatives will take place to be able to reach out to more young people. Adult service users will also benefit from social groups where they will have the opportunity to choose the activities they wish to engage in.

In line with the Agency's way forward of offering innovative and high-quality services, the Sharing Lives Team is engaging in European projects which will create opportunities for young people with disabilities abroad, both to develop relationships with their European peers and also be part of the European community.

16 service users benefitted from
social contact with volunteers

TESTIMONIALS

I started volunteering with the Sharing Lives service in June 2021. Sharing Lives gave me the opportunity to meet new people with new abilities and I have learned a lot thanks to them, by sharing our ideas, talking about ourselves and our experiences. We did not let the pandemic stop us from doing what we love the most, but we juggled around it to make things possible and that is the experience that Sharing Lives wants to deliver. Looking forward to more activities, lessons and fun in the coming year.

**NICOLE BARTOLO, 25,
VOLUNTEER**

I have worked with Sharing Lives owing to a University internship and without a shadow of a doubt it has been a resounding success for the development of my learning skills. This experience has been a formidable challenge for me. The team deposited enough confidence in me to take the lead of some activities and gave me space to think big and demonstrate my skills and value. Besides, I want to bear in mind the communication and teamwork they convey to me, which has been worthy of admiration and completely horizontal. I strongly believe that I will keep in mind the experiences and the tools that will contribute to give my best in the imminent future.

**LUCIA AMONDARAIN, 22,
ERASMUS+ STUDENT, VOLUNTEER**

Sharing Lives is something nice, because it allows us to meet and help each other. Apart from the youth group, we did a clean up, crafted a crib together and carried out voluntary work with horses. I feel very good during these activities. I enjoy it. I even enjoyed the time we sang. This was when we donated the crib that we did together to the priests. I really enjoyed it. Such experiences make you satisfied, when you help people. I enjoy it that we meet with friends. It's something really special that every week we have something different to do. I learnt a lot of things. I learnt about photography, about the importance of recycling, how to take care of our environment.

**JONATHAN CALLEJA, 28,
SERVICE USER**

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING SERVICE

Aġenzija Sappor offers the service of Sign Language Interpreting between Maltese Sign Language (LSM – Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija) and spoken language (Maltese and English) and vice-versa. Interpreting services are offered to facilitate communication in everyday life and therefore include a variety of sectors further aligning Malta with the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD).

These sectors include (but are not limited to) education, employment, health, law and court, social and leisure activities. This service is available to hearing-impaired individuals and for individuals and entities who would like to make their services or events more accessible to Deaf persons.

The year 2021 was the second one endured in the COVID-19 pandemic. During this year, the service was not only maintained despite mitigation measures but thrived because of them. Many service users have discovered the comfort of video remote interpreting (VRI) for short appointments which they would have not requested in the past. VRI became available for situations of quarantine or school closures but quickly also became a preferable service for many Deaf service users in other situations. For Deaf service users, VRI meant having full access to lip-reading and facial expressions,

which are vital elements of LSM. As the facility of remote interpreting became more popular, the interpreting service saw the range and number of requests growing. VRI has also meant having a more holistic service that could include requests such as (but not limited to) sight-translation of important postal information and making phone calls on the Deaf service users' behalf (relay interpreting).

Out of these contact hours, 1,878 hours of interpreting services were provided to 13 students in 12 different schools and colleges during lessons, exams, school meetings and course work.

Out of these appointments, 712 were for adult service users during medical, court or legal appointments, employment-related events, courses, NGOs requests, personal appointments (such as banking or job interviews) and filming for entities wishing to make their videos more accessible.

Interpreting service has also been provided to service users wishing to participate in opportunities which may otherwise not be accessible, including projects and conferences – locally, abroad and online.



3,860 contact hours of
interpreting service were
provided in 2021

1,965 appointments were attended by the Interpreters in 2021

Other highlights of 2021:

- Three students successfully completed post-secondary courses, two at MQF level 3 and one at MQF level 6. Most of their lectures were provided with sign language interpreting service to ensure accessible information and communication at par with other students.
- Online group sessions were organised for students during the summer. The aim was to support their developing LSM skills, provide accessible age-appropriate educational activities and an opportunity for the students to socialise in their natural language with their peers even if this could only be done online due to COVID-19 mitigation measures.
- A team of two interpreters travelled to the Ebro Delta in Spain to interpret at Erasmus+ transnational meetings held in November 2021 as part of the BANOFFEE and PANCAKE projects. Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs) have also interpreted numerous times for these projects' meetings remotely and supported the Deaf participants during such preparatory meetings.
- The interpreters have also supported Deaf participants during varied projects held locally such as the Erasmus Inclusive Diving Project and the Model European Parliament for young leaders. Interpreting in these cases was requested to be carried out both physically and remotely.
- The Sign Language Interpreting Team was nominated 'Best Team' for the Worker of the Year National Awards 2021 organised by the Social Dialogue, Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto, Privatisation Unit within the Office of



the Prime Minister. This was a great honour for the team and a reminder to keep evaluating the service and areas for improvement as done in the past.

The interpreters are also active members of a focus group within the Deaf community and LSM research at University of Malta. This helps them keep abreast of the developing LSM perspective and variants, participate in the development of new signs, and use this knowledge to explain specific terminology during their assignments which may not yet have been added to the LSM dictionary. Ongoing professional development is essential, requiring the interpreters to ensure they are up to date with the local development of LSM and international standards for sign language interpreting. During the year under review, the interpreters have also attended online webinars held regularly by the European Forum of SLIs. These were held in lieu of the annual conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

WAY FORWARD

The Agency will continue striving towards addressing the growing need for interpreting service for the Deaf community, in line with LSM having been recognised as an official language and with the Deaf service users' right for accessible information, communication and opportunities.

“

I would really like to thank the Sign Language Interpreters for their marvellous service. They accompany me constantly during my lectures at MCAST and they support me throughout all my studies and activities; none of which would ever be possible without their sterling service. Thank you!

SERVICE USER

“

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the interpreters for the service they have offered me and other Deaf persons making use of sign language interpreting to have an accessible life. This year I was keeping them particularly busy due to my work promotions and assignments. Moreover, they are offering their services for the little simple everyday tasks such as phone calls which are still a challenge for me as I cannot make use of the phone myself and whenever I find such a communication barrier, Sign Language Interpreters at Aġenzija Sapport are there to enable me and to make this happen; we work out things smoothly together. As a Deaf activist, I also give awareness sessions to people who do not know sign language hence interpreters are there to facilitate this process. If it had not been for interpreters, I would not be able to give such sessions and to advance in my career. I really hope that this team grows in the near future because your services are essential for me as well as for many others in the Maltese Deaf community.

SERVICE USER

”

TESTIMONIALS

“

All interpreters are always willing to provide their services regardless of their current situation. They are always very enthusiastic about interpreting services with many technical words used by my place of work such as during the meetings, interviews for managerial roles and training sessions that they have never heard before. Although the demand is always higher than the number of interpreters in Malta and Gozo, they have always done their utmost to be present. They have always shown a positive attitude, determination, and courage in difficult situations: personal matters, COVID-19 pandemic, and staff shortage. I would like to take the opportunity to thank them for always being there to provide interpreting services in all that is asked. Interpreters, please keep up your good professional work, good attitude, determination, and positive outlook. Well done, thank you and God bless you always!

SERVICE USER

”

PROJECTS



The implementation of the Electoral Manifesto Proposal (EMP) 07.070 - Proġett Soċjetà Ġusta falls under the responsibility of Aġenzija Sappurt. The Agency is tasked to construct and develop new residential homes for persons with disability within the community in accordance with highest international and Commission from the Rights of persons with disability (CRPD) guidelines.

PROĠETT SOĊJETÀ ĠUSTA

1. Qrendi Residence

A 4-storey corner apartment that will host nine persons with disability. The premises will also include a multidisciplinary area at basement area which will be used by persons with disability and for training purposes, and an outdoor area which will serve as sensory and BBQ area for service users.

Estimated contract value **€1,400,000**

Start date **Dec 2017**

Estimated completion date **Dec 2022**



2. Kirkop Residence

A 4-storey corner apartment that will host nine service users. The premises will include a counselling room and multipurpose rooms.

Estimated contract value **€1,300,000**

Start date **Sept 2022**

Estimated completion date **April 2024**



€70,362 – Total funding of ongoing maintenance interventions in 2021



€135,216 – the total cost
of minor projects in Support
Residences in 2021



MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

1. The Mtarfa Day Centre Modernisation and Extension

Also as part of the EMP 07.078, the Projects & Estate Management Team commenced with the first part of the infrastructural extension of the Mtarfa Day Centre in summer 2021. This is phase one of the modernisation project which involves the demolition of existing back area including garage, excavation, and construction of three-story extension. By end of 2021, works carried out involved the demolition and the demolition and excavation of the site. Following this

task, a delicate process commenced to carefully excavate by hand up to rock bed in search for any possible archaeological findings, which process was closely monitored by an external archaeologist. Two sets of development permits on this project, namely design of extension and building of boundary wall, were approved by the Planning Authority during the year under review. The project is expected to cost €7 million.

2. The Vajrita Complex

The first phase of the Vajrita Complex project was initiated in December 2021, involving the removal of apertures,

furniture, lifts, electrical items and loose items, in preparation for the demolition stage. The capital investment for the completion of the project is estimated to be €6.5 million.

3. The Ghajnsielem Learning Hub Refurbishment and Extension

Following the official allocation of the Hub to Aġenzija Sappor, works started on the 3-year project to improve the current facilities of the Ghajnsielem Learning Hub while also developing the current East wing of the premises for more services and programmes to be delivered from this location. Multi-sensory rooms, independent living rooms, areas for sessions addressing Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD), and new CRPD offices are a few of the facilities that will be introduced at the Hub once the project is completed.

Estimated contract value **€507,000**
 Start date **Nov 2021**
 Estimated completion date **March 2024**

OTHER MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Other major achievements of the Projects & Estate Management Department in 2021 included:

- An increase of 14.3% in the number of maintenance interventions over that of the year 2020.
- The approval by the Planning Authority for the construction of:
 - Kirkop new residence
 - An additional floor at Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre
 - New maintenance workshop at Hal Far Day Centre
- Finalisation of plans and designs relating to the replacement of kitchens and floor tiles in several day centres and residences.
- The procurement and installation of fire alarms in eight day centres and Head Office with an investment of €60,000.



- The installation of modern bathrooms in five day centres and one residence, with a cost of over €134,000.
- The installation of reverse osmosis in residences.
- the installation of 26 new energy-efficient ACs in a number of day centres, residences and offices.
- Upgrading of common area lighting systems in four day centres & Head Office.
- The signing of two framework agreements with the Housing Estate Management Ltd and Clean Malta which will provide the Projects Department with the facility to address requests relating from full embellishment to minor works.

MAINTENANCE INTERVENTIONS

The 1,191 maintenance interventions carried out during 2021 included:

- 458 interventions in residences
- 525 interventions in day centres
- 208 interventions in offices

Interventions ranged from complete refurbishment and upkeep of areas / sections within residences and day centres, full electrical installation, plastering and painting of residences, centres and offices, and other routine works.

Such interventions also included ongoing works in day centres as part of the EMP 07.078 – Modernisation of Day Centres, which comprise the upgrade of all day centres for persons with disability in Malta and Gozo run by Aġenzija Sapport, thus presenting service users with a modern and accessible environment.

WAY FORWARD

The Projects & Estate Management Department shall continue supporting the Agency's services and infrastructure through ongoing minor projects whilst developing on the listed major projects including:

€226,063 – the total cost of minor projects in Sapport Day Centres in 2021

- **Qrendi Residence** project as part of Proġett Soċjetà Ġusta
- **Kirkop Residence**
- **Vajrita Complex**
- **Mtarfa Day Centre**
- **Dar Andrew, Cospicua** – with civil works and refurbishment of the premises planned with an estimated investment of €60,000.
- **STILC project** – comprising of development of current premises to create more office space and clinics for assessments of service users, meeting rooms and counselling rooms, with an estimated investment of €300,000.
- **CCTV installation project** – commissioning and installation of CCTV equipment in nine day centres and 10 residences with an estimated cost of €75,000.
- **New kitchens** – first phase of a project to replace kitchens with modern, accessible units in day centres and residences with an estimated cost of €80,000.
- **Floor tiles** – replacement of floor tiles at various day centres and residences, with an estimated cost of €181,000.
- **Maintenance workshop** – premises for the Projects & Maintenance Team, with an estimated cost of €107,000.
- **Hal Far Day Centre** – refurbishment project of the front wing and the development of a new outdoor sports facility, with an estimated cost of €700,000.

HUMAN RESOURCES

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT & EMPLOYEE WELLBEING



The goal of the Human Resources: People Management and Employee Wellbeing Department (HR Department) within Aġenzija Support is to help strengthen individual and organisational performance through updated HR policies and practices. Aġenzija Support is an equal opportunities employer and strives to recruit employees who have the right knowledge, skills and attitudes for the various job opportunities that arise within the Agency. The main remit of the department is to focus on people management and employee wellbeing, leading the Agency's efforts to recruit, develop and maintain a workforce that meets the needs of a dynamic organisation.

Functions of the HR Department include:

- Recruitment and selection
- Payroll and data management
- Training and development
- Employee relations and people management
- Policies related to all aspects of employee performance
- Development, management and administration of family-friendly measures

Male employees	133
Female employees	478
Total number of employees	611

Table 5: Aġenzija Support staff complement as at 31st December 2021

The HR Department also encompasses a more holistic function including the area of employee wellbeing and staff engagement

26 internal calls and **33** external calls were issued between January and December 2021

RECRUITMENT

As a public sector entity, the Agency follows the provisions of Directive 7 with regards to recruitment processes. Moreover, guidelines and best practices issued by the People and Standards Division and the Public Service Commission are adopted to ensure fair and transparent processes based on the principle of meritocracy.



OCCUPATION	MALES	FEMALES	TOTALS
Administrative Support Worker	2	4	6
Executive II (Finance)	0	1	1
Executive III (Finance)	0	1	1
Executive III (HR)	1	0	1
Occupational Therapist	0	1	1
Part-time Support Workers	6	15	21
Full-time Support Workers	0	30	30
Executive III (Service Audit & Quality Assurance)	1	1	2
Executive III (Support Executive)	1	9	10
Senior Executive II (ICT)	1	0	1
Social Workers	0	4	4
Totals	12	66	78

Table 6: New recruits (including replacements), January - December 2021

OUTREACH MEETINGS AND CONSULTATION PROCESSES

During the period under review, the People Management and Employee Wellbeing Department initiated an outreach programme to discuss with each employee individually their concerns, suggestions and comments on their work experience. The aim of this initiative was to provide a forum of open dialogue, and at the same time, ensuring that employees feel more than just a number at their workplace. Interviews with each employee of the Day Services were held and such feedback compiled in a report and presented to Management. This exercise will continue with the other employees in the forthcoming period.

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

The department facilitates psychological assistance to employees going through personal and work-related issues. These schemes include the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and the Employee Support Programme (ESP).

12 Expressions of Interest were issued in 2021

The team also takes an active role in holding meetings with staff who are facing difficulties and encouraging the use of these programmes. Regular contact is kept with those employees who are on long sick leave, suffer an injury on duty or who are identified as facing challenges.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the period under review, the department coordinated and organised a number of training initiatives in order to cater for the Agency's training needs, thus investing in continuous employee development. Courses included both online and face-to-face training.

NAME OF TRAINING / WEBINAR / CONFERENCE / SEMINAR	NUMBER OF STAFF ATTENDING
AAC to support persons with PMLD	7
Active support	42
Aphasia: The journey to adaptation	14
Basic helping skills for the caring professions	24
Basic photography course	75
Breaking the news	14
Bridging the learning gap using Clicker 8 webinar	5
Choice and control for persons with disabilities during COVID-19	16
DBS 1006 - Services for an independent life	3
DBS 2004 - Sexuality and disability	8
Dementia care giving	4
Diabetes training	27
Disability and employment	23
Disability equality training	146
Domestic violence	28
Easy-to-read training	21
Epilepsy training	12
First aid	43
Food handling	23
Government modern workplace training	13
Grief from infancy to adulthood	7

NAME OF TRAINING / WEBINAR / CONFERENCE / SEMINAR	NUMBER OF STAFF ATTENDING
HR policies and practices	39
Induction training	40
Induction training for Senior Support Workers	5
Information session about UOM courses	11
Introduction to FITA, computers and assistive ICT	17
ISP training	28
IT training	58
Keyboard shortcuts for MS Teams for MS Windows	18
Leave portal training	11
Literacy and numeracy for professionals	21
MATP	243
MHFA	10
Minute-taking made simple	13
Behaviour of Concern Policy: NAPPI	163
NAPPI Level 2 course	129
NAPPI recertification for trainers	8
New corporate PowerPoint template	58
Para sport for individuals with physical impairment	33
Practical skills for managing stress	7
Self-advocacy	19

NAME OF TRAINING / WEBINAR / CONFERENCE / SEMINAR	NUMBER OF STAFF ATTENDING
Self-care and COVID-19	6
Self-care programme	35
Short training course on stroke care for caregivers	6
Supervision and leadership training	72
Supervision training	8
Training on diabetes	7
Training programme for new Support Workers	11
A paradigm shift in comprehensive care for persons with disability	1
Acknowledging the needs of persons with disability	1
Autism seminar in Gozo	7
COVID-19 vaccine deployment: What role for support services?	1
Disability Services: Do they work?	1
Facilitating language through play	2
Financial procurement and procedures	9
Group homes for children with disabilities? Disability rights perspectives	2
KPI training	3
Listening and giving a voice to the needs of the youngster with disability	1
Management leadership and governance	1

NAME OF TRAINING / WEBINAR / CONFERENCE / SEMINAR	NUMBER OF STAFF ATTENDING
The link between language and literacy	3
Training on CMS	13
Working with the context in the aftermath of news breakup - liaising with schools, services, community, peers, etc.	1
Car modifications	9
MOCA	2
Customer service queries	8
Access Israel's 7th international webinar	1
Keyword signing	1
Cascone training	10
Positive parenting: Connection before correction	2
EASPD Person-centred technology	2
EASPD Conference: The Future is now - Person Centred Technology to Empower People and Disability Service	4
RealCare Baby - Intelligent Baby	7
Technology to facilitate leadership and self-advocacy by persons with disabilities	3
Aspire training	6
Step-by-Step training	19
ASD Apps for tablets	1

NAME OF TRAINING / WEBINAR / CONFERENCE / SEMINAR	NUMBER OF STAFF ATTENDING
Phonetic Transcription Workshop	1
Barriers and opportunities of technology adoption in support services for persons with disabilities	2
BrainApp public engagement	6
RealCare Baby training	5
Fundamentals of finance for non-accountants	1
Zero Project Conference	2
Project on disability: Developing a positive identity and a sense of capability	1
Project on disability: Transitioning from the personal to the collective – building a team as a driving force for social change	1
Policy Café on the European Commission's proposals on the European Disability Strategy & adequate minimum wages	6
Winning and repairing trust in the talking therapies	1
Masterclass – Sustaining family resilience in the context of challenges with paediatric ill health, loss and disability	3
Assistive technology	6
Challenges of deinstitutionalisation: staff and their skills	2

NAME OF TRAINING / WEBINAR / CONFERENCE / SEMINAR	NUMBER OF STAFF ATTENDING
The right to make decisions: advancing the issue of legal capacity for persons with disability	3
ESN awards ceremony	4
Webinars: OT services	2
Skills: Europe in Action 2021	2
Safer moving and handling	21
Feeding and swallowing difficulties	7
Policy Café on child guarantee action plans	2
Social skills for children with ASD	7
Healing sounds: Sound and music-based interventions in therapeutic practices	5
Training in cyber security	2
Mental wellness at the workplace webinar	2
General discussion on the right of persons with disabilities to work and employment	2
Job coaching	2
NCPE annual conference	2
L-ilsien Malti fix-xandir	2
Prezi: How to design and deliver stunning Prezi video presentations	2

Table 7: Training attended by Sapport staff, January - December 2021

Online training opportunities attended in 2021 included:

- Access Israel's 8th international webinar
- Budget overview 2022
- Capital gains tax on transfer of securities
- Combatting and preventing hate speech
- COVID-19 conference
- COVID-19 vaccine deployment: What role for support services?
- Cybersecurity
- Discussion on the future of the disability card: what kind of card we want?
- E4D online launch conference
- Employment: Fiscal and practical considerations
- Employment law
- ESN Members Forum
- ESN seminar: Social services resilience and care continuity
- Ethics awareness learning programme
- EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030
- Europe Forum 2021
- Excel standard course
- FB ads and FB marketing masterclass course
- Google ads search certification
- Health ageing for persons with disabilities
- HR and social media: The Latest Trends
- Il-Jum Internazzjonali tal-Mara – NCPE
- Improving accessibility to cultural heritage in the streets of Valletta
- Inclusivity and diversity in performing arts
- Information session (car adaptations and modifications) - Cascone Autonomy Ltd.
- Interpersonal skills
- Introduction to job search skills
- ISO 31000:2018
- Journalism Award for Excellence webinar

- Listening and giving a voice to the needs of the youngster with disability
- Malta Paralympic committee
- Mastering presentation skills
- MITA: Teams live
- Module 3: Industrial relations
- MSOffice 365
- Occupational Therapy - Geriatric Forum Malta
- Occupational Therapy services
- Online M365 Training: Microsoft Forms
- Online M365 Training : Microsoft Teams breakout rooms
- Online Microsoft Power platform training: Microsoft Power BI (basic level)
- Overview of people management
- Payroll & fringe benefits
- Policy Café on the UN Draft General Comment on Article 27 “ Work and Employment“ of the UN CRPD
- Policy masterclass
- Post COVID perspectives: Focus on Social Workers' perspective
- Problem solving for accountants
- Self-care and resilience
- Sign language workshop
- Skills4Sports opening conference
- Social marketing and attitude change
- Talks about dementia
- Tax consolidation
- The art of parenting
- The evolving workplace: Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic
- Training session about dysphagia
- Understanding and being sensitive to the needs of parents of young children when receiving negative news / diagnosis
- Value Added Tax (VAT) - the right of deduction
- Webinar about pensions

In addition to above, as per the Collective Agreement (2017-2021), the Agency offers two opportunities of funding in regards to training and development to its employees. The HR Department received a number of applications for these two types of funds:

TYPE OF FUND	NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS
Continuous Professional Development (CPD) , which is applicable to warranted professionals and for Allied Health professionals, who have a licence to practice issued from the relevant medical board and who practice their profession within the Agency	18 €6,226
Training Fund	18 €4,884

Table 8: CPD and training fund utilised, January - December 2021

2021 has been a challenging year but it has also provided learning opportunities to explore how to work differently and transit to a diverse form of working

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2021

1. Standardisation of HR forms, in particular those related to training and development.
2. Internal launch of the Employee Handbook – this remains a works-in-progress, constantly being updated to include new information for the benefit of employees. A

17 employees participated in training courses under European Social Fund (ESF).02.063 – Knowledge, Training, Communications and Support Measures in Support of Vulnerable Groups in 2021



Maltese version will be produced in 2022, making it more accessible to all employees.

3. Review and presentation of two policies: Dignity at Work Policy and the Employee Wellbeing Policy.
4. Investment in Talexio training software, which allows inputting of training data including training statistics, documents, resources and certificates. All Aġenzija Support employees were given access to this platform to access their training records and keep track of their upcoming training sessions.
5. Further digitalising measures through Indigo online application for vacation leave which now allows all employees to apply for their vacation leave online and have access to their payslips and FS3s. This also enhanced the data management of employees.

EU FUNDS



INK - PERSON-FOCUSED INCLUSION PROJECT

ESF.02.054

INK project is a project under the management of Aġenzija Support, an EU co-funded project under the European Social Fund 2014 - 2020. The project was extended until 2022 and will be closing mid-2022.

In 2021, INK project started training its last cohort including 26 persons with disability, 24 of whom completed the training sessions successfully. This group showed a high level of determination to work and proved eminent independent skills.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic and the current restrictions, the last INK cohort was divided into two groups and training was held week in, week out to be able to keep up with training two groups at the same time, using bigger facilities for training to abide by the COVID-19 measures.

Throughout the year, digital literacy sessions were offered and service users had the opportunity to broaden their knowledge by having access to further information using digital technology. This helped participants gain digital literacy skills to enhance their independence. By the end of 2021, a total of 24 service users were eligible to receive the

tablet as part of the project since they had attended 70% of the project and five months of training.

As part of the training, one of INK project phases is Transition, during which trainers and INK staff dedicated most of their time in finding relevant and fruitful visits for the service users to gain hands-on experience in the retail and sales sector, catering sector, animal shelters, hospitality sector, and more. Furthermore, INK service users were given the opportunity to spend a day in one of the Agency premises at Tal-Virtu, and got to practice their independent skills with the help of INK staff, including cooking skills, cleaning skills, and the up-keep of the house. During the Transition phase, sessions on healthy eating and health and safety were delivered by professionals in the sector. Additionally, INK participants conducted and obtained an awarded certification in Basic First Aid and Food Handling by Jobsplus and St. Bernard Training Institute. As part of the Transition, service users were also offered





17 work placements were held in the year 2021

transport training, which supports and guides the service user in being independent and gain confidence in travelling alone.

Training for INK staff is also given high importance. Some of the courses and sessions attended during the period under review include:

- Mental Health First Aid offered by Richmond Foundation
- Food Handling by Jobsplus
- Job Coaching Webinar by the Malta Employers' Association
- Epilepsy Training by the Malta Epilepsy Association
- Disability Equality Training by CRPD
- Skills4Sports by the Malta Football Association
- Gozo Stakeholders Meeting on Employment and PWD in Gozo by CRPD

Other highlights include the nomination of INK service users for the Enable Abilities campaign held during the Disability Week and the project's win of The National Supporting Business Awards 2021 (Winner in Section A - Responsible and Inclusive Entrepreneurship) organised by the Ministry for the Economy and Industry. This prestigious award came with a €15,000 prize which was donated to several NGOs working in the disability sector.

Training of the rest of the community is deemed key to the success of the INK project, and therefore during 2021, 24 parents of persons with disability, and 260 employers were trained. The number of employers trained includes all the drivers who offer their services to Aġenzija Sapport, providing them with more knowledge on different disabilities, how to communicate with persons with disabilities and how to manage certain situations.

QUALITY CONSULTING & SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT



The role of the Quality Consulting and Support Services Department is to monitor, consult and support which will further assist the Agency to propose ideas and strategies to continue improving Aġenzija Support and its services.

The Agency believes that to be able to provide the adequate support required and to put forward ideas and effective strategies, continuous feedback, ideas, collaborations, and participation of all stakeholders is necessary. Stakeholders include everyone who is part of the service provision of Aġenzija Support, such as service users and their families, employees, management, and anyone who might have an impact on the life and services being offered to persons with disability. The involvement of all stakeholders is indeed what is required to reach the department's mission, which is to:

'Encompass both service provision that meets the needs and preferences of persons with disabilities and those of their relatives and the experience and satisfaction of all professionals that form the Agency'.

This department supports the continuation of good service provision and is continuously striving for constant service improvement and service users' satisfaction. Furthermore, it aims to monitor and provide a snapshot of Aġenzija Support in all its aspects. Such insight enables the department to evaluate the Agency's operations, services, and performance in terms of adherence to national and international standards and best

practices guidelines, and also in terms of stakeholders' level of satisfaction with, and experience of, Aġenzija Support.

AĠENZIJJA SUPPORT HELPLINE - FREEPHONE 153

The Aġenzija Support Helpline pilot project was launched in November 2020 with the aim to serve as the first point of reference with Aġenzija Support for service users and potential service users in relation to queries, services provided, complaints and recommendations. Therefore, this helpline serves as guidance, assistance and a focal point to the general public. All calls are answered by professional and experienced Helpline Officers and information provided is treated with confidentiality and is recorded through the Helpline system. Such data is always considered for service improvement according to the exigencies of trends, cases, queries or issues reported by the general public.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The Situational Analysis that was planned for 2021 was postponed due to COVID-19 circumstances and is planned for implementation in the year 2022. The Situational Analysis will present the Agency with an in-depth insight about the Agency from all stakeholders by carrying out group discussions and one-to-one interviews to identify where it needs to progress. The information collected will be analysed and will serve as a basis for the holistic identification of areas requiring improvement across Aġenzija Support. Recommendations for improvements and changes will be presented based on the outcomes.

Conducting a Situational Analysis is important for Aġenzija Support since it will assist the Agency to create a framework to enhance its planning by setting up priorities, delegating tasks, carrying out processes and ultimately evaluating the successful outputs.

Aġenzija Support Consultative Committee

Expression of Interest

Interested service users and their relatives may apply to become members in the committee

Email: qa.support@gov.mt
Tel: Aġenzija Support Helpline 153 (and press 5)





The implementation of the Situational Analysis ensures that all voices are heard and all aspects are considered. In line with the Agency's person-centred approach, all stakeholders are regarded as experts in their own field. The fundamental aim is to encourage dialogue, draw upon information received and collected, and develop recommendations by which Aġenzija Sapport could improve.

Therefore, the implementation of a Situational Analysis within the Agency will help it analyse several internal and external factors and their impact on the future of the Agency which furthermore will help the Agency to identify its:

- Capabilities and practice in relation to the current and future service provision.
- Service users' experiences, service satisfaction and expectations.
- Potential service users to help the Agency plan for future budgeting on a national level and to be proactive in the creation of further tailor-made services that will continue to be focused on a person-centred approach.
- The experience of the employees and the impact of the working environment within the Agency, also highlighting the effects of retention and turnover and the impact on the service provision and the service users' experience within the Agency.

Carrying out a Situational Analysis is of utmost importance for the Agency, as it will serve as a useful tool to determine the strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats that can influence its future.

AĠENZIJJA SAPPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Aġenzija Sapport Consultative Committee is a new initiative which was launched during the period under review. This new initiative will provide persons who make use of the Agency's services and their relatives and legal guardians with the opportunity to meet once every month and give their opinion on various identified aspects and matters. In turn, this provides the department with a direct account of the



service users' and relatives' experience of the Agency, upon which recommendations for development and improvement of services will be put forward.

Such initiative will assist Aġenzija Sapport to continue developing and give the best services possible. Hence, this Committee will provide a platform for representation of service users and their relatives or guardians by giving them a chance to voice out any issues. The implementation of such initiative will encourage collaboration, dialogue and the exchange of experience and expertise for the benefit of people with disabilities and their families. The non-executive Consultative Committee will also include members who represent Aġenzija Sapport during the meetings. Elected members will serve on the Consultative Committee for a year after undergoing an interview process involving three representatives: one from Aġenzija Sapport, one from CRPD and one from SCSA.

STRATEGIC MARKETING & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



The evolvement of the Agency, the development of the services and implementation of its vision are reflected in the service delivery and operations. As a public entity, the Agency is committed to communicate and increase awareness and exposure to reach the target audience including service users and their family members, prospective service users, professionals, and the general public.

In order to make a difference,
you must connect with people
in the right way

Maintaining the brand and exploring new means of reaching the audience is a constant commitment of the Strategic Marketing & International Relations Department.



MEDIA INTERVENTIONS

Jan-Dec 2021: **121**

WWW.SUPPORT.GOV.MT

Page views Jan-Dec 2021: **108,035**

New users Jan-Dec 2021: **27,775**



SOCIAL MEDIA

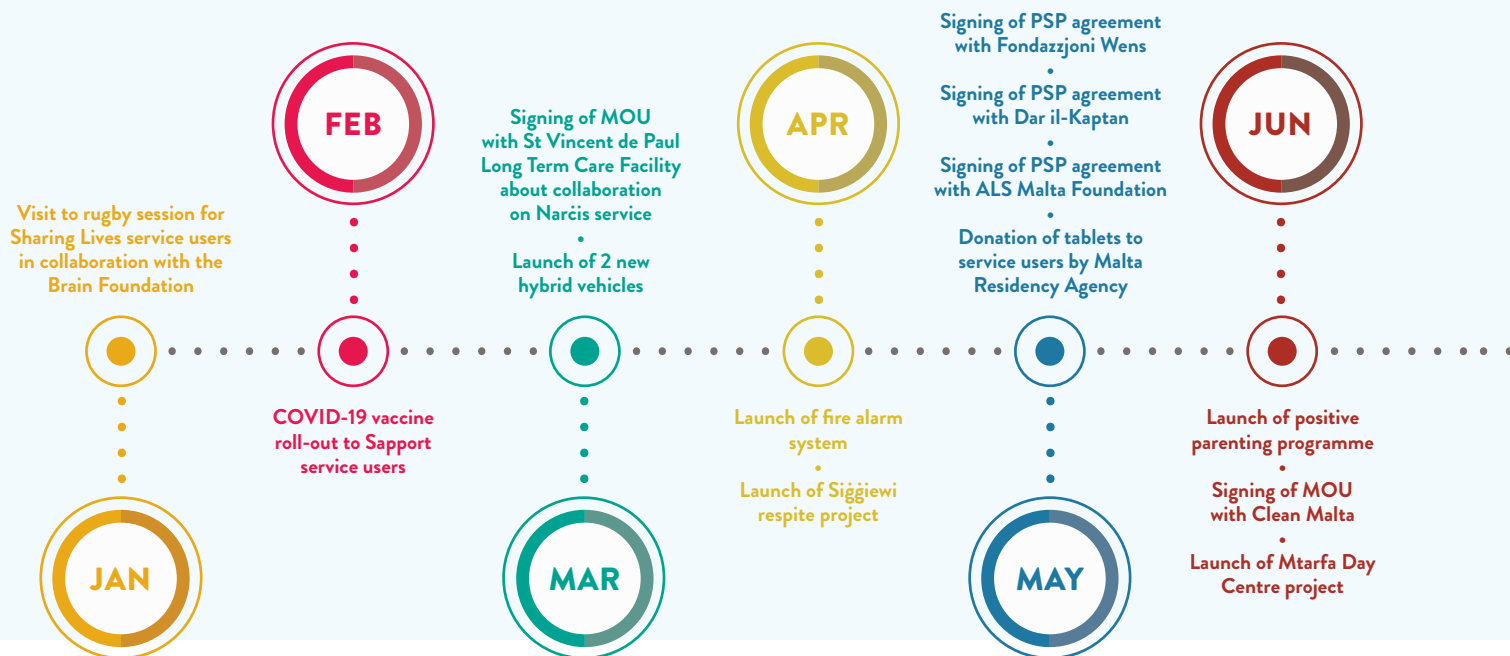
Messenger messages Jan-Dec 2021: **476**

Followers as at December 2021:

- Facebook: **12,012**
- Instagram: **880**
- Twitter: **61**
- LinkedIn: **489**

Social media remains the top most followed medium and thus great detail and planning goes into the maintenance of the corporate online platforms, with regular and strategic updates to ensure highest visibility, audience reach and engagement. These complement the other public relations efforts and events thus ensuring that exposure reaches a wider audience through different media.





EVENTS

Event planning and management is one of the tasks within the remit of the Strategic Marketing & International Relations Department.

Other initiatives include:

- Collaboration with Ministry for various official visits to Sappor services.
- Regular campaigns including: Helpline, call for Sharing Lives volunteers, siblings workshops, positive parenting courses, ACTU webinars, INK project.
- Promoting all external calls issued by the HR Department.
- Give coverage to training coordinated for employees.
- Give coverage to the various initiatives coordinated for service users.
- Various career expos to promote the Agency as an employer and its various career opportunities.

- Ensure branding and standardisation.
- Deliver training to Sappor staff, including workshops on the production of easy-to-read documents and basic photography sessions, corporate PowerPoint presentation, employees induction training.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Strategic Marketing & International Relations Department is also instrumental in building new connections with international partners and maintaining relations in order to enhance collaborations and share resources and best practices.

Through this department, Aġenzija Sappor remains an active member on various associations including the European Social Network, ZeroProject and EASPD. Collaborations include participation in international conferences, webinars, access to online reports and research findings, networking

Consultation with persons with disability about the National Disability Strategy
 •
 Special Olympics certificate-giving ceremony to Support employees
 •
 Signing of PSP agreement with Fondazzjoni Nazareth



Launch of new Driver Test Station

Launch of project for new residence - Kirkop



Career fairs at University of Malta, Junior College and MCAST

Launch of Consultative Committee
 •
 Sharing Lives volunteers' appreciation night
 •
 ACTU international conference 'Assistive Technology - Unlocking Potential'



Signing of PSP agreement with HILA Homes Ltd.
 •
 Launch of new outdoor area at Mtarfa Day Centre

with professionals from other entities, collaborations on one-to-one level with such entities, participation in study visits, and also representation on a number of international taskforces or working groups. Such exposure puts the Agency in a leading position as a service provider.

In 2021, work started on drafting the first Standard of Procedure for International Relations bringing together various Agency policies in relation to training and duty travel. The highlight in 2021 was mainly the return of in-person participation in international events, and also the initiation of a collaboration with EASPD for an international conference to be hosted by Aġenzija Sapport in Malta in October 2022, which will bring various international and local experts together for this 4-day event about quality services for persons with disability.



FINANCIAL REPORT

The Finance Department is entrusted with the responsibility of the overall financial governance of the Agency. It is responsible for all the accounting transactions, financial analysis and reporting, budgetary allocation and control, and treasury management. All responsibilities are conducted in accordance with statutory obligations, the Fiscal Responsibility Act and other relevant legislation. The members of the Finance Department strive to provide adequate and timely reporting, and to act as a supporting arm to the other departments within the Agency.

During the year under review, the Agency experienced an increase in requests from service users who required home care and community services. In the meantime, residences' and day centres' operations continued to be the main operational expense of the Agency with other ancillary services growing as well. This necessitated proper cash flow monitoring to meet increased expenses and thus ensure that all service users are provided with efficient services.



OUR
STRATEGIC
OPERATIONAL
PLAN
2022-2026

	2019	2020	2021
Government subvention	€15,500,000	€18,370,770	€20,530,000
Other grants	€5,436,457	€4,895,701	€6,114,443
Total	€20,936,457	€23,266,471	€26,644,443

Table 9: Agenzija Sapport budgets, 2019 – 2021



Figure 2: Agenzija Sapport budgets, 2019 – 2021

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

In order to maintain a sustainable service, the Agency required additional Government investment for the disability sector, which increased over the previous year. In 2021, €26.6 million were received in government grants, programmes and initiatives, and capital grants (Table 9). This was a substantial investment by the Government in this sector and equates to a 15% increase over the previous year.

RECURRENT EXPENDITURE

The operational and administrative expenses of the Agency are split in cost centres for the following services provided:

- Day Centres
- Residences
- Community Services
- Assessment and Intervention
- Independent Living Centre
- Access to Communication and Technology Unit
- Administration, HR, Finance and CEO Office
- Marketing
- Client Schemes

Operational expenses for years 2020 and 2021 is shown in Figure 3, with the main expense being that of payroll, synonymous to a service organisation.

In 2021, the most significant increase in operational expense was registered from Collective Agreement increases and increments, transport costs as well as additional recruitment of several professionals and other care workers in the field. The specialised services continued to grow with increased outsourced services mainly respite services, and assistance provided to service users in the community through the provision of care, goods and assistive technology. A significant increase in the Agency's assistance schemes was registered in the year under review.

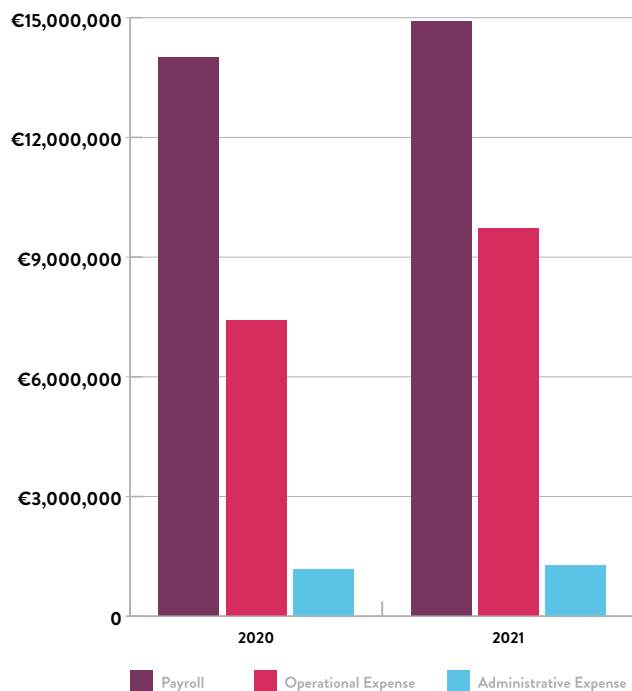


Figure 3: AĠENZĠJA Sapporot operational expenses, 2020 – 2021.

The Agency continued to implement the Budget Measures through ring-fenced funding.

The Finance Department ensures that all expenditure is in line with Public Procurement Regulations and Employment & Industrial Relations Act (EIRA) regulations. Expenses are authorised in line with policies, established procedures and internal controls. All Government grants received by AĠENZĠJA Sapporot were utilised in the most efficient way possible in order to provide the best value-for-money service to service users.

AĠENZĠJA SAPPOROT STRATEGIC OPERATIONAL PLAN

During the year 2021, the Finance Department was instrumental in the drafting of the Agency's five-year strategic operational plan covering the period 2022-2026. The overarching objective of this strategy is for AĠENZĠJA Sapporot to continue driving change and enhancing its services and projects towards more inclusion for persons with disability within society. This strategic operational plan will require new injection of funds and increased financial governance. It will entail that the Finance Department manages the finances more efficiently and effectively, in an accountable and transparent manner ensuring quality services and value for money.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

The Agency, through capital grants obtained from the Government, continued to invest in its asset base through the near completion of the Qrendi Residence. More work is planned on the Kirkop Residence next year. Works have commenced on the Vajrita and Mtarfa projects and financial commitments are in place to complete these projects.

A number of other smaller projects were carried out during the year to embellish the Agency's properties.



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