



ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Aġenzija Sappport, Malta

Annual Report 2022

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ABBREVIATION LIST

A&I	Assessment & Intervention
AAATE	Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe
AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
ACTU	Access to Communication & Technology Unit
CMS	Case Management System
CRPD	Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
EASPD	European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities
EAT	Electronic Assistive Technology
EC	European Commission
EMP	Electoral Manifesto Proposal
ENIL	European Network of Independent Living
ESC	European Solidarity Corps
ESF	European Social Fund
HR	Human Resources
ICLM	Independent Community Living Monitoring
ISP	Individual Support Plan

IT	Information Technology
LSM	Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija
MATP	Motor Activity Training Programme
MHFA	Mental Health First Aid
MIVC	Ministry for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisations and Consumer Rights
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPPI	Non-Abusive Psychological and Physical Intervention
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OT	Occupational Therapist
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities
POMA	Protection of Minors' Act
PSP	Public Social Partnership
SLT	Speech and Language Therapy
STILC	Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre
UNCRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



MISSION STATEMENT

Aġenzija Support is the National Agency that provides professional and innovative services to enhance the quality of life of persons with disabilities.



VISION

The Agency's vision is to be the leader in guiding the community which promotes ability rather than disability.



VALUES

Integrity

Respect

Equity

Empathy

Co-production



FOREWORD - Hon. Julia Farrugia Portelli

One undeniable reality of life is that we cannot influence the flow of time, but is it beyond our control? It all depends on how we can still get the most of it in our work, our daily chores, family matters and personal ambitions. Looking back at one other year of solid commitment and dedication always serves a stimulus to, well, more commitment and dedication. Happily, both are in abundance at Aġenzija Sapport.

Bound as we are by a 2022 electoral manifesto full of challenges and aspirations, therefore, time will continue to be of the essence. The manifesto includes a massive projection of one thousand pledges which are being ticked off the list at an impressive rate. We are steadfast in our ambitions to honour the pledges pertaining to our Ministry as we have proven since and now seek to achieve as we go full throttle towards new targets and achievements.

We are committed to assisting persons with disabilities to rightfully enter the labour market. The fact that in 2022 Malta had the highest rate of employed persons with disabilities in the world speaks for itself. We now move from the INK training project, which saw more than 200 persons with disabilities and many others in the sector beneficially involved, to the Way to Work Programme that should open doors and provide opportunities in the labour market.

While the success of the Narcis Project since 2021 filled us with enthusiasm to now have this unique experience for the aged and persons with disabilities replicated, one flagship proposal that we plan to bring to fruition is the provision of personal assistants to persons with disabilities who need them. This will come with an ample and happily supplied investment of €4.2 million.

However successful, new schemes require updating as new needs and circumstances crop up. This means we determinedly plan to fine-tune such schemes as those which provide exemptions and reductions on the purchase of special vehicles for use by wheelchair-bound persons. This has already comprised an €80,000 investment for the acquisition of a modified car that will be used to help wheelchair-bound persons learn to drive.

Sexuality is a major aspect of human life that needs to be respected and be taught and explained to offer equality also in the disability sector. Hence our intention to launch an educational programme on sexuality as a way to assure equal opportunity and treatment.

There is a need also for more services in the community for persons with disabilities while promoting even more research in assistive technology and artificial intelligence to maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence, thereby promoting his or her well-being.

All this and more will take time and expense, but with hindsight, we know we have been able to deal with both in the fulfilment of other pledges. It is indeed the time for more commitment and more aspirations in a sector which can be as dynamic and challenging as it is rewarding and valuable.

Julia Farrugia Portelli
Minister for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisations and Consumer Rights



FOREWORD - Mr Oliver Scicluna

During the past months, I have had the privilege of working with so many hardworking colleagues and being trusted to lead Aġenzija Sapport in its natural direction, which is to be a service provider that strives to align with the obligations of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). I have also had the opportunity to hold discussions with many employees working across the Agency, including persons with disabilities and their families. Through my experience working in the disability sector, we have started to change the way the Agency operates by implementing a reorganisation with the aim of creating a balance between the departments in charge of services and directorates servicing the Agency, such as the Finance and Procurement Department, Administration and Projects Department, and the Human Resources Department. These departments support over 600 employees working within the Agency and hundreds of service users who use our services on a daily basis.

We have introduced the Quality Audit, Research & Innovation Department to ensure that Aġenzija Sapport develops in a research-based manner, services are audited for their quality, and continuous risk management exercises are carried out. We have also introduced Change Management to ensure that we continue to fine-tune and develop in a way that our employees understand our cause and help them align themselves to it. Through Change Management, we will make sure that we prepare ourselves for forthcoming challenges and realities.

Aġenzija Sapport has started working towards restructuring its day services to ensure that such a service aligns with the UNCRPD, and that persons with disabilities attending will benefit from its maximum potential. We are working hard to empower persons with disabilities to be active participants in society. Furthermore, we have started planning the deinstitutionalisation of persons with disabilities. This strategy goes hand in hand with the reform we are currently working on in relation to personal assistants and personal budgets. I want to especially thank the European Network of Independent Living (ENIL), who are continually helping us plan this reform. Through the concept of personal assistants, persons with disabilities will have the option to continue living in the community while being empowered to achieve their wishes and aspirations.

In 2022, after finalising the European Social Fund (ESF) project INK, we launched the Way to Work Programme with the intention of supporting persons with disabilities in attaining specific skills to help them enter the labour market. We have started tapping into our day services to give such opportunities to persons who have been unemployed and attending day services. This strategy was done to empower these individuals with the intention of them getting employed. We have also started planning to review our People Assistance Schemes, such as the Empowerment Scheme, to make them less bureaucratic and more efficient.

In 2022, we launched the Family Support Unit with the intention of providing more structured support to families of persons with disabilities while delivering sessions such as positive parenting and Super Sibs sessions for minor siblings. In October 2022, we successfully hosted an international conference for the European Association for Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) in Malta. Through this conference, we had the opportunity to discuss the achievements and challenges with other service providers from across the globe.

When I look back at my first few months at the Agency, and considering that I have been involved in the sector for over ten years, I can still say that I have learned a lot. I look forward to continuing to change and align Aġenzija Sapport with the principles of the UNCRPD, in collaboration with all the Agency's employees and service users. This will guarantee a better future for persons with disabilities in Malta and Gozo. Special thanks go to the Office of the Permanent Secretary and the Ministry for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisations and Consumer Rights, who cooperate with us along the way.

Mr Oliver Scicluna
Chief Executive Officer

Services	Number of service users in 2022
Assessment and Intervention Services	2,445
Positive Parenting	67
Day Services	522
Supported Independent Living Services	85
NGO Services	494
Community Services	108
Independent Living Monitoring Services	305
Empowerment Scheme	1,310
Vehicle Road License Exemption Scheme	648
Vehicle Registration Tax Exemption Scheme	131
Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre	342
Access to Communication & Technology Unit	407
Sharing Lives	200
Sign Language Interpreting Services	75
Blue Badge	2,735
Way to Work Programme	31
Helpline	6,163*

Table 1: Number of service users who benefitted from Support services in 2022

*number of calls received



Figure 1: Support premises locations

A photograph of two women smiling and embracing each other outdoors. The woman on the left is wearing a black baseball cap and sunglasses, and the woman on the right is wearing sunglasses. They are both smiling broadly. The woman on the right is wearing a bright pink shirt. In the foreground, a black sewing machine is visible. The background is a bright, slightly out-of-focus outdoor setting with some greenery and a white structure.

SERVICES



Assessment & Intervention Services

The team follows and screens intakes received, and refers cases according to need. Social Workers act as a link between service users and other intra and inter services which can assist them to reach their full potential and meet presenting needs.

Service users are offered a holistic service according to their individual situation. The Social Work team includes a total of 20 Social Workers who form a crucial part of the Assessment & Intervention (A&I) Team.

220

new cases were allocated to Social Workers in 2022

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 assist service users all the way through the whole process, by liaising with other services and other stakeholders.

The Social Work team assisted a total of

2,445

persons with disability during 2022

The underlying goal of the Social Work team is to advocate and empower service users to reach a level of independent living and not become dependent on services.

Throughout 2022, the Agency registered a considerable increase in service request especially by persons with acquired disability.

During the year under review, the team received 182 new referrals eligible for social work services, dealt with 733 phone intakes and a further 81 drop-ins.

Another major project was the coordination of a qualitative study that aimed to present the Agency with information on what services are lacking in the acquired disability area.

Support groups

It is imperative that apart from supporting persons with disabilities, their supportive network must be supported too. Enhancing its support groups section, the team coordinated the first Super Sibs programme, an initiative targeting minors who have siblings with disability. New support groups for adults who have siblings with disability and support groups for parents of children with disability, were also held during 2022.

Collaboration with other stakeholders

The importance to collaborate with other entities to assist service users is highly considered. During 2022, the Social Work team signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Domestic Violence Unit within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services. Other discussions are underway to enhance ties between other inter-Agency/intra-Agency teams.

Another achievement is the nomination of a significant number of team members for the Malta Association for Social Workers awards. Indeed a team member won the award for Outstanding Newly Qualified Social Worker while a number of colleagues were shortlisted. This event was a showcase of the hardworking A&I team, professionals who work together for the best interest of service users.

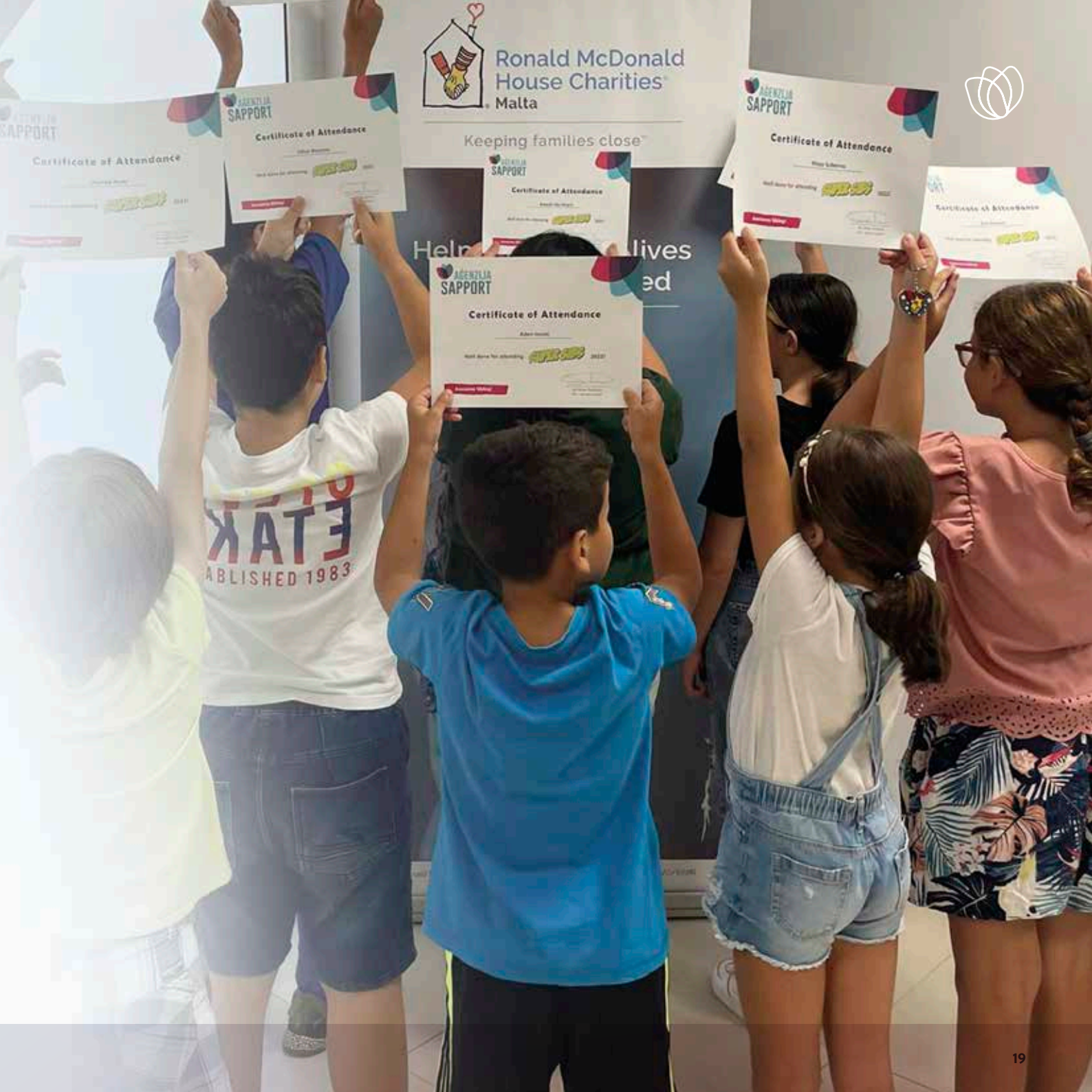
Way forward

Towards the end of the year under review, the Positive Parenting Service was transitioned to the same management of the Social Work team. It is planned that the various support groups and workshops will be amalgamated to create the first Family Unit within the Agency, in line with the National Strategy for Persons with Disability.

The Social Work team is planning further improvement and efficiency in the screening of intake cases, where cases referred for Independent Community Living (ICL) funds will be referred directly to the ICL team, while the Social Work team will address the waiting list of those persons who require social work intervention. This will assist the social work professionals to focus on the social work tasks and decrease administrative work.

16
children attended the first Support Super Sibs sessions

18
adult siblings benefitted from support groups in 2022



Ronald McDonald
House Charities
Malta



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Certificate of Attendance

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ESTABLISHED 1983

Positive Parenting

56

**groups session
were delivered in 2022**

The main objective of this service remains that of guiding parents in supporting them to empower their children to being more independent; fostering a healthy parent – child relationship, methods of positive discipline, offer tips for dealing with different behaviours, and taking care of ourselves as parents.

Following a pilot project for the introduction of Positive Parenting Services within Agenzija Sapport in the year 2021, more sessions were delivered in 2022, reaching more parents and families of children with a disability, based on feedback from parents who attended the previous groups.

During the year 2022, a continuous feedback exercise was carried out amongst the participants of the groups to collate information about their preferences, suggestions and response to the positive parenting training courses.

Seven online groups were delivered on a weekly basis to a total of sixty three parents. One face-to-face group for a total of four parents was delivered in collaboration with the Cottonera Community Services within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services. Seven sessions of two hours each were delivered with each group. Individual Parent Coaching was also offered to those parents who required more individualised and in-depth coaching. A total of ten parents benefitted from these individual sessions after they attended for the training courses.

Way forward

The Positive Parenting Services are planned to continue being delivered in the year 2023. Following a restructuring exercise the service will move under a different directorate within Agenzija Sapport whereby further development to these services is being planned.

67

**parents benefitted from
Positive Parenting sessions**



Community Services

During the year under review, Community Services continued to develop its referral procedure and allocation assessment after holding discussions and gathering feedback on the service's vision. The new procedure involves Community Services professionals and Social Workers discussing every case and assess the need for the service in accordance with the eligibility criteria.

The restructuring of the service required all current Community service users to be assessed individually to assess their eligibility criteria in line with the new vision of service provision. This process is still in course and this exercise led to a number of service users being referred to other existing schemes within Agenzija Support, health, and social care entities, to accommodate better their needs. This may be also considered a remarkable improvement, as at present most services being provided are established on independent living programmes according to the Individual Support Plan (ISP) aimed at reaching one's needs and wants. This is the foundation of Article 19 in the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCPRD), "Living independently and being included in the community".

Community Services empower individuals to engage in meaningful livelihoods by being supported in a range of activities that prevent isolation or segregation from the community.

Another way of supporting our service users in community integration and learning necessary independent living skills was the collaboration between Community Services and Sharing Lives. Since both services are under the same management, communication and collaboration between the two services have encouraged the simplification of having a number of community service users participate in Sharing Lives activities, increasing their social opportunities through meeting new people and spending time together. The range of activities was planned according to one's ISP, interests, and availabilities. Each activity is followed-up with documentation to assess the performance and the session in its entirety.



108

**service users
benefitted from
Community Services
in 2022**



Staff development

During 2022, all personnel working within Community Services were provided with various training and professional development sessions, intended to have all staff deliver good quality services. Both professional and personal development are integral within the Agency, and professionals working within this team had the opportunity to attend support groups led by a Clinical Psychologist, targeting various work and life aspects. This was complemented by sessions on teamwork and team cohesion. Other training included Non-Abusive Psychological and Physical Intervention (NAPPI) training and other specialised sessions on current social situations, such as domestic violence and substance misuse, which are helpful for staff working with families. Investing time in training all personnel in the prevention and management of the behaviour of concern has led to an evident decrease in incidents.



778

hours of service provision by Community Services per week in 2022

Other achievements

- In 2022, peer supervision was introduced during which Support Workers working with the same service user meet up and discuss any improvements, ways of working, and any concerns. These are followed up by the Support Executive and any feedback is submitted to other professionals. Peer supervisions, similar to case reviews, allow for better communication with other services within Aġenzija Sapport and other local service providers.
- Community Services also embarked on the Community Hubs pilot projects: Ġirasol in Rabat and another hub in Żurrieq. These premises offer various facilities for professionals, service users and Support Workers to work hands-on in a controlled, accessible environment. Through the utilisation of the Community Hubs, service users will have the space to engage in the learning daily living skills and socialisation activities. These hubs will also offer a space for professionals from where they can conduct assessments, supervision and case reviews.
- Another two vehicles were bought in 2022 for Community Services – a wheelchair-accessible van with low flooring for Malta and a hatchback vehicle for Gozo, allowing for more support interventions in the community.

Way forward

Consolidating the collaboration with other services and entities in Malta is given priority as this presents more room for efficient and effective services for the service users. It is planned that Community Service will continue changing its structure and will launch the new programme in 2023 including meetings with Agency employees, service users, parents, guardians and other stakeholders.



Independent Community Living Monitoring Service

The year 2022 saw the consolidation of the Independent Community Living Monitoring (ICLM) Board (Direct Payment, Independent Community Living and the Personal Assistant Fund). During the last quarter of the year, the administration part of the service joined the Financial Department of the Agency.



Average of 300
claims per month were processed
by ICLM team during 2022

ICL Board

The incorporation of the three schemes under one Board has resulted in smoother transitions for service users who need to access the different schemes. Furthermore, service hours of persons with disabilities receiving funds for more than 30 hours of support per week are being revaluated by the Board on a yearly basis whilst the other situations are being reviewed once every two years. This will ensure the continuous re-assessment of situations and fair distribution of funds.

Major achievements

- Monitoring of the presenting situation of persons who receive financial subsidy to buy hours of personal assistance, assessing needs and recommending service delivery according to need.
- Having an in-depth assessment which can be utilised also by other services, mainly supported independent living and respite services. This shortens waiting times for such services when needed. This also helps to reduce duplication as same assessment is utilised.
- Referring service users to other services such as housing, foodbank, etc.
- Advocating for the service users whereby the professionals are involved in meeting with other professionals and supporting the service users in a diversity of situations, including hospital appointments/reviews, educational plans, etc.
- Maintaining the Case Management System (CMS) throughout the year thus enabling the team to work towards a digitalised system.

During the last quarter of the year, the ICLM professional team joined the A&I team to allow further alignment and continuation with the social work team.



	Direct Payment	Independent Community Living	Personal Assistance Fund
Total number of service users availing themselves from funds through respective scheme	121	86	98
New service users (out of total number of beneficiaries) who started receiving new funding	20	18	10
Utilised funds	€1,324,307.88		€1,370,152.63

Table 2: Independent Community Living beneficiaries and funds, 2022

Day Services

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

The Day Services team works hard towards having the service users and their families at the centre of all its efforts. Annual case reviews were held for attending service users in order to review the ISP of the service users. Follow-up exercises were also conducted to reassess the needs of the persons who were not utilising the service in an effort to address the waiting list. In order to continue addressing the waiting lists, back-to-back agreements and terminations of service users who no longer require day services were done. Continuous discussion was held in view of the increasing demand for day services

Physical attendance at the day centres has also increased along the year. Additionally, more than 80 feedback sessions were held within day centres, including SPERO and STAR, to get feedback directly from the service users and their families.

During 2022, Day Services expanded the variety of programmes being delivered within the day centres, through various initiatives including:

- The continuation of Motor Activity Training Programme (MATP), bocce and swimming training in collaboration with Special Olympics Malta
- Courses delivered by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh
- Music sessions at Villa Bianca in collaboration with the Malta Trust Foundation
- Online sessions between different day centres



50

service users participated and won medals at the Special Olympics Invitational Games held in Malta in May 2022, competing in bocce and swimming

- Hybrid sessions including cooking, hair care, independent living, advocacy, Information Technology (IT) skills, culture and music sessions
- Leisure activities and community outings
- An online Carnival event
- A cancer-awareness walk around Mtarfa
- An online Christmas gathering
- Christmas markets
- Gala nights
- Christmas gift exchange between day centres and Secret Santa activity

A major achievement was an art exhibition held between November and December in collaboration with Heritage Malta at Fort St. Elmo, where services users from all day centres had the opportunity to exhibit their artistic works related to the chosen theme of resilience.

Staff

In 2022, 33 team meetings and eight think days were organised. Support groups were offered to the personnel within the leadership teams and supervision sessions were held regularly. A management meeting with leadership teams and individual meetings with Senior Support Workers were also introduced in every centre in 2022.



36
new service users started
attending Day Services in
2022

All staff, including leadership teams and management, received training on addictions and bullying. Other training included NAPPI, MHFA, Autism and spell framework, planning and organisational skills to leadership and MATP coaching. Day Services also partnered with other entities on EU projects with training visits held in Estonia for leaders and coordinators, and in Madrid about hybrid learning.

The Day Services are a partner in an Erasmus Project – Social PEAS with Friends of the Earth, during which staff are being trained in permaculture, and initiating different projects within Day Services as follow-up of such training.

Environment

Throughout 2022, 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. Significant works in 2022 included:

- Upgrading of front wing and hall at Ħal Far Day Centre
- Installation of an outdoor gym at Ħal Far Day Centre
- Tiling works at Mtarfa Resource Centre
- Multisensory facilities at Fleur-de-Lys Day Centre
- Electricity upgrade at Fleur-de-Lys Day Centre
- Refurbishment at Gardjola Day Centre
- Installation of new railings in front garden at Baħar iċ-Ċagħhaq
- Installation of accessible bathrooms at Sliema Day Centre

Networking

Throughout the year, day centres looked into ways of collaborating with other entities in order to promote the concept of active citizenship and community inclusion. These involved voluntary work within animal sanctuaries and various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), clean-up events in collaboration with local councils and other initiatives within the community.

An art exhibition called “Resilience: Thriving in Adversity” was held at Fort St. Elmo during November 2022, in collaboration with Heritage Malta.

Day Services continued to invest into building and strengthening bridges with different entities to increase the opportunities for its service users. During 2022, we saw various collaborations going on, as listed below:

- Aġenzija Żgħażaġh – SAFER Internet course and sessions on relationships and bullying
- Special Olympics Malta – bocce and swimming training sessions, MATP, healthy athlete screening, Invitational Games (May 2022), European Week of Sports (September 2022), bocce tournaments
- 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 – utilisation of premises
- Bidnija Horse Riding – equine therapy sessions
- Foodbank – voluntary work
- Dentistry Department within the University of Malta – provision of dental check-ups
- Malta Trust Foundation – delivery of music therapy sessions at Villa Bianca
- Heritage Malta – organisation of art exhibition at Fort St. Elmo
- Friends of the Earth – partners in an Erasmus+ Project, Social PEAS, focused on permaculture
- Local Councils in Malta and Gozo – Clean-up day
- Ministry for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisations and Consumer Rights (MIVC) – participation in Christmas Market

- Opening Doors – discussion regarding a project on creative dance
- Jobsplus – food handling course for service users
- Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) – Disability-Equality Training for service users, families and staff

Throughout 2022, Day Services emphasised the importance of service users having the opportunities to practise active citizenship, through giving back to the community by engaging in regular voluntary work.



Supported Independent Living Services

The Supported Independent Living Services provide support within personalised living accommodation in the community. The aim of these living accommodations is to enhance and promote the independence, inclusion and empowerment of persons with disability through a person centered plan.

Following two years living in a pandemic, the service users went through a challenge to return back to their previous routines as the rest of the community. Whilst in 2020 and 2021 their lives revolved around keeping themselves safe, 2022 involved a leap back towards achieving personal goals and working towards individual ambitions. Service users found themselves once again enrolling for school or employment training, going back to their previous work positions or engaging in new employment opportunities, reconnecting with their friends and families, and participating in mainstream leisure activities.



85

**service users were
benefitting from
Supported Independent
Living Services as at end
2022**

Achievements

- The inauguration of new apartments in Żurrieq, accommodating five service users.
- Five service users were accommodated within residential placements at Casa Nuovo, a facility providing support for persons with disability in Paola, under the responsibility of HILA Homes Ltd.
- Seven new service users were accommodated within some of the supported independent living facilities, to avoid institutionalisation whilst empowering supported independent living.
- The service focused on enhancing the support provided towards service users by training staff members through NAPPI, enabling the re-integration of service users from institutions such as Mount Carmel Hospital.
- An upkeep of areas within premises took place to ensure that they are up to standard and provide a homely environment.

- Service users participated in various activities including Summer Daze Festival, various weekend breaks in local hotels and also travel.
- The professionals within the Service attended training on Leadership and on the implementation of Active Support with persons with disability.
- Six professionals participated in an exchange programme in Estonia which focused on services for semi-independent living and educational resources which can be used with persons with disability. This was a great opportunity for the professionals to gain further exposure on how to enhance and improve the Agency's services.
- Various team-building activities were held with different teams within the Service to maintain healthy and resilient teams.



Way forward

Supported Independent Living Services aim to continue working towards semi-independent living and to maintain the inclusion of persons with high support needs within the community, to avoid institutionalisation. This means that the Service needs to develop further opportunities for independent living for persons with disability, and supported independent living facilities tailored to support the needs of individuals who require higher levels of support, including those with behaviour of concern. This would involve:

- Initiating partnerships with the Housing Authority to facilitate the rental of apartments for persons with disability.
- Focusing towards better personalised support, empowering abilities and skills, and improved co-decision making.
- Facilitating service user goals, such as taking a break and travelling to the country of their dreams, finding a fulfilling job and feeling accomplished, learning new daily living skills, and learning how to self-advocate.
- Opening a new premises in Qrendi to facilitate new semi-independent living placements for more persons with disability.
- Embark on further exchange programmes and training initiatives for the professionals within the Service to continue supporting their professional development and growth.

NGO Agreements Service

The NGO Agreements Department is responsible for the implementation and management of Public Social Partnership (PSP) contracts between NGOs and the MIVC. The department continues to monitor and support the homes, respite services, and day programmes falling under their remit, to ensure that service users and their families are receiving adequate support and are benefitting fully from the services they receive.

PSP Agreement	Service provider	Number of service users covered with PSPs in 2022
Dar l-Arcipriet Degabriele	Fondazzjoni Nazareth	10
Dar Madre Tereža	Fondazzjoni Nazareth	10
Dar Nazareth	Fondazzjoni Nazareth	10
Dar il-Wens	Fondazzjoni Wens	23
Dar Merħba	Fondazzjoni Wens	4
Dar L-Abbiltà	Fondazzjoni Wens	16
Dar Arka	Fondazzjoni Arka	15+1 respite bed
Dar il-Ġublew tal-Ġniena	Fondazzjoni Arka	5
Dar Madonna ta' Pinu	Fondazzjoni Arka	5
Akkwarell	Dar tal-Providenza	3
Dar Pirotta	Dar tal-Providenza	10
Shalom	Dar tal-Providenza	5
Dar Bjorn	ALS Malta Foundation	13
Dar il-Kaptan Respite	Dar il-Kaptan	132
Dar il-Kaptan Day Programme	Dar il-Kaptan	154
Malta Autism Centre		40
Embrace Diversity		38
Total		494

Table 3: PSP agreements and service users in 2022

Throughout 2022, the NGOs team continued reviewing referrals of new service users who required service for either a residential placement in one of the NGO homes or those requiring respite services or day programmes. Case reviews for residential service users continued to be held to ensure that service users are being supported through a person-centred plan, which supports these individuals to work towards their goals and aspirations. Additionally, in 2022, the NGOs team worked on the following attainments:

- Carried out an exercise to collect feedback from all service users residing or availing of services falling under PSP agreements to determine the level of satisfaction with the service provided. The information collected was presented to each service provider, aiming to encourage the enhancement of their service based on the feedback received.
- New PSPs were signed with Dar tal-Providenza and Fondazzjoni Arka for the provision of services from Dar l-Akkwarell and Dar Madonna ta' Pinu respectively.
- A new PSP agreement was signed between Aġenzija Sapport and Embrace Diversity, subsidising the provision of service for 38 individuals with a disability or multiple disabilities.
- Carried out 34 assessments for service users in preparation for placements in the new Dar Bjorn in Żebbuġ.

Way forward

The NGO Agreements Service will retain the practice of collecting feedback from service users to ensure quality services are received and be able to provide such feedback to the service providers. Further collaborations will be worked on in 2023 with new PSP agreements, allowing for the provision of services to more persons with disabilities. Additionally, the NGO team will be subdivided into two teams: NGO Respite and Day Services, and NGO Residential Services.



186

**assessments were carried out
in 2022 for respite services,
day programmes, and
residential placements**

People Assistance Schemes

The People Assistance Schemes (PAS) incorporate three (3) main schemes, which are:

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

2022 highlights

- E-forms for all the schemes were created ensuring that such application forms are user friendly and accessible to all citizen through E-ID thus providing digital security.
- Implementation and continuation of scanning and storage of applications and/or files related to Vehicles Schemes was done and is in the final stages.
- Discussion about the process of digitalisation of files in relation to the Empowerment Scheme and Grant Scheme, including a needs assessment to affect such a task.
- Amendments in the Vehicles Exemption Schemes were affected and implemented as of January 2022.
- Needs assessment and acquisition of equipment needed to ameliorate the workflow.
- Drawing up and discussion of proposal in regard to restructuring plan of Empowerment Scheme.
- Initial stages of CMS preparation through meetings and delivery of basic information about current system. This process will continue in 2023.

1. 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.

Total number of applicants	Total number of cases approved	Number of cases waiting Board presentation	Total amount approved by Board	Total amount claimed
			€	€
1,489	1,310	152	717,102.88	761,557.02**

Table 4: Empowerment Scheme applications and funds, January – December 2022

** This sum may contain funds which were approved during 2021 but availed of during 2022

2. 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.

No. of applications processed		
Total	Not eligible	Eligible applications
669	21	648

Table 5: Vehicle Road Licence Exemption Scheme applications, January – December 2022

3. 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.

No. of applications processed
131

Table 6: Vehicle Registration Tax Exemption Scheme applications, January – December 2022



Blue Badge

The Blue Badge is a legal document aimed at facilitating parking on reserved parking bays for persons with disability and mobility impairments. The Blue Badge Department was launched at Aġenzija Sapport in March 2022 whereby the service was transitioned from the CRPD to the Agency.

The main aim of the Blue Badge is to facilitate independent living for persons with disabilities or people suffering a mobility impairment. Each application is treated with confidentiality and utmost responsibilities towards service users.

During the period under review 3,791 applications for new Blue Badge documents and for renewal of existing documents were submitted to Aġenzija Sapport.

The Blue Badge team also works in coordination with CRPD in relation to enforcement whereby 70 cases were reviewed over reported abuse. The Agency also liaises with Transport Malta in relation to the Personalised Reserved Parking, offering its services for the medical assessments required in this regard.



2,735

**Blue Badge documents
were issued by Aġenzija
Sapport between March
and December 2022**

including new and renewal applications

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 and guidance on car adaptations. Persons with disability are also able to receive driving lessons using a modified car, through the Adaptive Driving Motoring School.

During the year 2022, STILC continued with the development of the service delivery through further training to the professionals who provide services within STILC. Furthermore, the Department continued to embark on improved administrative processes, investment in human resources and financial outlay in order to ensure an improved service. The number of service users and appointments continued to increase on those reported for 2021. During the year 2022, €8000 were invested on new equipment to be used for the Wheelchair and Seating Clinic, allowing for the therapists to have more resources at their disposal within their clinical work with the end service users.

In June 2022, the STILC adaptive driving team consisting of Occupational Therapists and a driving instructor, received training in Birmingham, UK, on the assessment process of persons with disability and the use of car adaptations. This measure costed over €20,000, reaching nine trainees who have benefitted from this training delivered by Driving Mobility UK. This allowed the Occupational Therapists assessing the service users referred to the Driving Clinic to acquire more specialised knowledge to be able to offer a more informed service and hence be able to make the most accurate recommendations that reflect the service users' needs.

In December 2022, STILC received a drive-from-wheelchair vehicle in order to expand the service further and be able to cater for a larger array of needs presented by the service users. This new vehicle allows the Agency to offer driving tuition to persons with disabilities who use a wheelchair to drive directly from the wheelchair without having to transfer to a car seat. This came at an investment of over €80,000. Training on the use of this vehicle for assessment and driving tuition is planned for early 2023, whereby the driving team will be attending training to enhance their knowledge.

Further training was provided on specialised wheelchair and seating assessments in collaboration with Ottobock. Collaborations with local suppliers were maintained in order to strengthen the Agency's position as a national service provider by continually improving the product knowledge of the team to reflect the latest and most

advanced technologies available in the market. This allows the service to prescribe those products which best meet the service users' complex needs.

This is an important aspect of the clinical work as holistic and informed recommendations can be offered to the service users, allowing them to maintain and improve their independent living.

The STILC team also continued its work and commitment towards the introduction of a CMS, which incorporates the concept of an electronic system for maintaining service users' records with controlled access to uphold data protection. The whole team received training on the use of this system in order to obtain optimum results and efficiency out the initiative. Continued work on the CMS is planned for the year 2023.



342

**service users benefitted
from STILC services in 2022**



595

**appointments were facilitated
by STILC team in 2022**



Welcome
to



RDAC
Regional Driving Assessment Centre

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 support and training on the use of 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.

ACTU offers face-to-face appointments as well as telehealth (online) appointments to the service users receiving the service. Community visits which include home, school and day centre visits, are also offered if necessary.

Another service provided by ACTU is the Information Day service. This service aims to provide one-off consultation sessions to therapists and their service users who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the full ACTU service but require advice on AAC or EAT needs. Furthermore, professionals who want to view equipment/software or discuss EAT or AAC can book an appointment for the information day. The service has six pathways which include: Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD); Adults with Learning Disability; Adults with Neurological Conditions; Gozo; Professional Requests in Malta; Professional Requests in Gozo.

Research is also an ongoing commitment for ACTU professionals. This is necessary within the team's remit to advance the field of assistive technology both on a local and international level.

ACTU service uses a transdisciplinary approach to service delivery together with models of practice pertaining to the field of AAC, Assistive Technology, Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech and Language Therapy (SLT). The assessment process utilised is in line with international practices as also highlighted by World Health Organisation. Another important aspect of service delivery is educating the families and professionals to up-skill others with a view to increasing capacity building across the country and across different populations.

Training

- The 3rd online annual conference entitled Assistive Technology: Literacy for All, including the contribution of international speakers.
- Bespoke training to three Church schools and two Government schools to help educators to implement AAC.



- Bespoke training to an Independent school on strategies and use of assistive technology to support literacy.
- Training at the Ghajnsielem Learning Hub on the implementation of AAC with PMLD population.
- Training to Gozo Resource Centre educators and Allied Health professionals on the implementation of AAC specifically using Liberator software packages.

Collaborations

In May 2022, a visit to AIAS Bologna Onlus in Italy was made to start a collaboration between AIAS and Aġenzija Support. This would involve job shadowing and exchange of expertise particularly in relation to assistive technology. A MOU was signed to establish this collaboration.

Further collaboration was maintained with the Malta Trust Foundation for the provision of funds to service users for AAC/EAT solutions.

Various other collaborations include those with AAC suppliers. During the period under review, ACTU hosted two visits by Liberator Limited International Manager Mark Street who visited ACTU to demonstrate the new range of devices, participate in assessments and update/repair existing service users' devices. Another two visits by Shaun McCormack from Smartbox Limited were also hosted to demonstrate the range of products, provide training on their products and participate in assessments.

ACTU therapists also continue to provide expertise to the Association of Speech and Language Pathologists in the development of a new Maltese language AAC app. ACTU also has an active role in the upgrade of an existing Maltese language AAC app in collaboration with the University of Malta. This project will ensure that all undergraduate Speech and Language Therapy students have some exposure to an AAC-specific environment.

Training and international contributions

Two ACTU therapists represent Aġenzija Support on the EASPD Person-Centred Technology Member Forum, through which a paper was presented during the Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe (AAATE) conference in Lecco, Italy, about the development of the Person-Centred Technology Policy Paper and outcome measures in assistive technology. The therapists also presented at EASPD's Malta pre-conference session on Assistive Technology and Digital Accessibility.

Three therapists presented a case study workshop on Developing an Ecosystem to Support AAC Users in the Mainstream Classroom. Two therapists presented also a thematic session on AAC and Sensory Processing Difficulties Considerations.

Two therapists attended the Autism Congress in Poland and presented two presentations one on the implication of sensory processing in the implementation of AAC with the autistic population and the other on the AAC service offered by ACTU to the Autistic population.

Over

€38,000

were invested to procure new equipment to be used during assessments with ACTU service users

Data 2022

- 407 service users benefitted from ACTU services in 2022
- 715 appointments were carried out
- 200 appointments were cancelled / not attended by service users
- 140 service users were discharged from ACTU services
- 25 Information Day requests were closed; a further 11 Information Day requests were open as at the end of 2022

Way forward

- More international collaboration with EASPD
- Coordination of yearly online conference
- More investment in training of ACTU therapists to ensure up-to-date knowledge
- Hosting more suppliers' visits for the benefit of therapists and service users of AAC
- Present a paper at first conference by the Association of Speech and Language Pathologists Malta

83

new referrals for AAC services

39

new requests for Information Day appointments

Sharing Lives

Sharing Lives 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. The service is motivated by the belief that people with disability have a right to live a meaningful life.

Sharing Lives celebrated its 5th year of operations within Aġenzija Sapport. Since its launch in April 2017, the service has strived to create new opportunities for its service users where they socialise with others, have fun and experience new things.

12

service users benefitted from social contact with volunteers

194

activities were held in the year 2022

Regular events organised by the Sharing Lives team included: summer live-in, seasonal parties, boat trips, pottery workshops, voluntary work, visits to historical sites, and well-being sessions.

Other long-term programmes such as art and drama sessions, and rugby and rowing training, were coordinated in collaboration with other NGOs and volunteers. Such collaborations involved the Brain Foundation, Inspire Foundation, Spark 15, RMJ, University Rowing Club, Malta Football Association, Scissors Sisters, YMCA, Aġenzija Sedqa and Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ.

During 2022, the youth group kept its weekly meetings, including a formative programme on sexuality attended by 12 members and facilitated by Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ. Sharing Lives also collaborated with the Sapport Community Services and co-organised several activities during the year. A pilot project was also conducted, targeting volunteers on short-term basis between the age of 16 and 20 years.

Throughout 2022, Sharing Lives worked with 42 volunteers, of which 33 remained active. Having this high number of volunteers whom remained active is another record for the service. The service also offered placements to local students reading for a Masters in Humanitarian Aid and Psychology. It also hosted Erasmus+ students on internship on a short-term basis.

This year's significant achievement was the involvement in European projects and other related training and networking opportunities for staff. The Agency also successfully obtained the Quality Label from the European Union Programmes Agency through which Sharing Lives can lead projects and support and host volunteers under the European Solidarity Corps (ESC). Consequently, the service started implementing its first ESC project by hosting two foreign volunteers. ESC opened up the possibility of Sharing Lives to recruit volunteers on a long-term basis to support the service's efforts. Moreover, the volunteers offered fresh ideas and concepts for creative programmes. Another first for Sharing Lives was the participation of eight service users and two volunteers in a week-long youth exchange in Logrono, Spain. Here, the service users tackled the theme of integration and used theatre as a tool for expression and active citizenship.

The youth trend amongst Sharing Lives service users persists, with 67% of active service users being young people under 35 years old.

A total
127
volunteers gave their
service to Sharing Lives
since its start

96
new referrals to Sharing
Lives in 2022

200
active service users
within Sharing Lives

Way forward

The steady demand for service shows that Sharing Lives is reaching its goals and making the impact desired among service users and in the community. To respond to the demand, Sharing Lives will start a restructuring exercise to be more efficient in delivering service and reach out to more service users. Extending the network of collaborators, both local and foreign, is also essential. More youth exchanges under the Erasmus+ Programme are also in the pipeline. Another milestone for 2023 is to create a youth club where young people with disability can meet up with other peers and volunteers and engage in non-formal activities.





Way to Work Programme

The Way to Work Programme offers direction to persons with disability to enhance or gain additional skills for independent living, employability skills, and strengthening social engagement and cohesion.



31

individual service users benefitted from Way to Work programme between June and December 2022

Following the successful completion of the EU-funded person-focused inclusion project, INK Project, the Agency worked on project continuity, which led to the new service Way to Work, launched in mid-2022.

The service started its first training cohort in November 2022 consisting of 16 service users focusing on various topics including independent living skills, employability, boundaries at the workplace, hygiene, use of public transport, and other topics that help the individual becomes more confident to seek employment, live independently, and be part of the community. There is also continuous liaison with other departments within the Agency and other entities and also outsourced resources to collaborate on the delivery of the training.

Way to Work started offering one-to-one sessions to service users who require extra assistance in particular areas such as writing a CV, building job-seeking skills, money and time management, public transport training, and others.

The Programme's core value is to provide the service users with a skill-based practical programme that assists them to familiarise themselves and identify the ideal employment for the person, and focus on building knowledge on particular skills required.



Staff training

Way to Work team members attended various training sessions to enhance their skills, including:

- NAPPI
- working with offenders
- autism and the SPELL framework
- improving well-being and building resilience
- mental health first aid
- local and international webinars and conferences on job coaching, quality of life and support services, positive parenting, bullying, disability and equality

Way to Work staff also attended a youth exchange organised by GEYC and Erasmus+ in Bucharest, Romania, and a training course held by Prisms Malta focusing on Autism.

Way forward

The perspective for 2023 is to progress the standardization and stability of the service while reaching its full implementation, focus on creating more awareness on employment and its benefits to both parents and persons with disability, and pursue more service users and future cohorts. More networking and outreach with other services and entities will also be embarked on so to reach the full potential and aim of the service.



Sign Language Interpreting Service

Aġenzija Support offers the service of Sign Language Interpreting between Maltese Sign Language (LSM – Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija¹) and spoken language (Maltese and English) and vice-versa, across Malta and Gozo.

Interpreting services are offered to facilitate communication in everyday life and therefore include a variety of sectors further aligning Malta with the UNCRPD. These sectors include (but are not limited to) education, employment, health, legal, social and leisure activities. This service is available to hearing-impaired individuals who use Maltese Sign Language.

Offering a personalised service to all their service users means that each Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs) takes time to understand the context, the situation and the individuals where interpretation is required to ensure the highest service user accessibility and satisfaction. Ongoing professional development is essential, together with adhering to the interpreters' professional conduct, staying updated with the development of LSM and with international standards for sign language interpreting.

A significant number of hours of service were provided to ten students in different schools and colleges ranging from kindergarten to post-secondary educational entities and beyond, such as the University of Malta where a student completed a Masters' degree, and for lifelong learning courses.



3,305

the number of hours of direct contact by Sign Language Interpreters in 2022



1,252

appointments were attended by the Sign Language Interpreters in 2022

¹ LSM was declared an official language of Malta in 2016

Appointments attended by the SLIs in 2022 included interpreting for adult service users during medical, court or legal appointments, employment-related events, courses, NGOs and personal appointments (such as banking and job interviews).

Interpreting services have 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.

Highlights of 2022

- The year saw a return to in-person interpreting however, some service users still prefer using Video Remote Interpreting services for certain appointments as they have found this option a very convenient alternative.
- Five students have successfully graduated from their courses, four of whom graduated from MCAST and one student from the University of Malta with a Masters.
- Educational visits and activities were organised for students and their families over summer. The aim was to support their development of LSM skills, provide accessible age-appropriate educational activities and also an opportunity for the students to socialise in their natural language with their peers.
- A team of two interpreters interpreted during the opening and closing ceremonies of the Special Olympics Invitational Games held in Malta.
- A team of two interpreters travelled to France, Greece and Scotland with service users to interpret at Erasmus+ transnational meetings held in April, June and November as part of the BANOFFEE and PANCAKE projects. SLIs have also interpreted numerous times for these projects' meetings both physically and remotely and supported the Deaf participants during preparatory meetings.
- The interpreters have also supported Deaf participants by interpreting during varied projects held locally such as Sign Links and Sign Teach Online.
- One of the service users was a protagonist in an audio-visual production produced by the Aġenzija Support Marketing Department for International Week of the Deaf.

Way forward

In 2023, the interpreting team is looking forward to further developing their abilities and skills by participating in training and conferences both locally and abroad to better provide for the increasing demand for the service and to diversify the service as demanded by the Deaf community and service users. Online supervision will also feature in 2023, thus allowing for further professional and team development ultimately resulting in an improved service provision.



Support Helpline

The Agenzija Support Helpline was launched in November of 2020. This is the main point of contact for services related to disability provided by Agenzija Support. Helpline officers provide information and assistance regarding any service offered by the Agency.

Since its launch, the Helpline Department has registered over 10,500 calls.

6,163

number of calls received
by the Agenzija Support
Helpline in 2022

Way forward

Through the Helpline service, the Agency gets a clear picture of what are the needs of the public who calls on the Agenzija Support Helpline, gathers information about where the Agency needs to improve and enables it to plan the way forward according to the needs.

HELPLINE for
persons with disabilities

Call us on ☎ **Freephone 153** to benefit
from Agenzija Support services

 **AGENZIJASUPPORT**

servizz.gov



Testimonials



Positive Parenting:

"Thanks to this opportunity, I have not only found a group that supports us as parents of children with disabilities ... but it also gave us the chance to meet other parents facing the same struggles."

Sandra Vella, parent

Day Services:

"Attending the day centre meant establishing good and meaningful relationships with others."

Service user

"I learnt new skills and explored new interests."

Service user

"Attending the day centre made me feel useful, productive and gave me the opportunity to help others, and contributed to create a positive sense of self."

Service user

"I am Owen. I have been attending the Fleur-de-Lys Day Centre for almost 15 years. 2022 was a special year for me as I had the opportunity to participate in the Special Olympics Invitational Games. It was such a pleasure training professionally for bocce, learning about this sport and acquiring new techniques that allowed me to compete with other foreign athletes. I was so happy when I was chosen to represent Malta and I went on to win gold. Another milestone is working hand-in-hand with the Support Workers to produce handcrafted items that we then sold during the Christmas market. That allowed me to be a member of the organising committee."

Owen Buhagiar, service user

"I am Nicholas. I have been attending the Mtarfa Resource Centre for about two and a half years. I enjoy my time there as I get educational sessions, read books, learn how to use the tablet, we listen to music, talk with my friends and enjoy community outings together."*

Nicholas*, service user

**Name has been changed to protect identity of service user*





Way to Work Programme:

"My daughter has global development delay and is diabetic. Learning things is not always easy. She has just started attending sessions with Anthea, where she will be teaching her money recognition and management and also GPS application. After her first session, Kelsey was very excited and told me all about the session she had, learning through games and using her mobile to calculate the money. I am also being kept up-to-date by emails. Agenzija Sapport will also be helping Kelsey with job searching in the future."

Parent

"Professionals have helped me a lot through the process in preparation for independent living as well as for work and other stuff that they taught me."

"So far I've been working for 10 months and it's all thanks to their hard work and dedication helping me to be prepared for independent living and most importantly for work; without them I wouldn't be where I am today."

Neil Vella, service user

"I am happy that I contacted this service. I made new friends and learned a lot. Tutors helped me how I must behave at my workplace, how to behave and speak during an interview and how to apply for a job. I had work placement and now I have a job at Memo International that I love and I am well treated by my employer and employees. Thank you for helping me improve and having a job that I like."

Samantha Agius, service user

Community Services:

"My Support Workers help me practice various activities of daily living required to live independently. I am learning how to bathe, dress, put on my shoes and tie laces, cook, and manage money. They provide me ample time to learn such skills at my own pace and according to my needs."

Nicole Borg Chircop, service user

"Working within the Community Services team, I have learned to be empathic toward the service users and families I support. I have learned ways and means to support and communicate in the best way possible to build a therapeutic relationship. It has been a learning experience, pushing me towards believing more in myself and be determined to teach and practice new skills with the persons I support. Working within this team, I have learnt the importance of being flexible in my work practice, according to the service user's needs."

Alexandra Calafato, Support Worker

"Each passing day presents a number of diverse challenges that need to be addressed in order to create a difference in the lives of persons with disabilities. Working within Community Services has increased my aspiration to make a positive outcome in society, regardless of its impact. After all, my role as a Support Executive mostly involves interacting and assisting frontliners to fulfil duty aspects to aid and assist service users in their day-to-day routines, despite their limitations. Therefore, I feel honoured to provide a trivial credit for making a valuable contribution to the life of these individuals."

Joseph Curmi, Support Executive





Sign Language Interpreters:

"I am very pleased and honoured with the professionalism of your interpreting service. By means of your service, I am advancing well in my technical career, my sports career and of course, personal matters, for which I am very grateful. The quality of service is excellent, and I also appreciate your flexibility."

Service user

"An absolutely sterling service. All the interpreters are considerate, and are very passionate about their work. Interpreters, you all deliver the service with utmost dedication, professionalism and care. I also understand and appreciate that the work is deeper than just interpreting to and from Maltese and English into LSM. Sometimes you manage to do the impossible and for this I am truly grateful."

Service user



"I am the mother of two Deaf children. The sign language interpreters do incredible work with my children especially when it comes to education because they support them so well. Moreover, whenever I need to know any particular sign, they send me videos right away and this helps me to communicate with my children better. They are always there to support us."

Parent

Social Work:

"As a family, we needed help, so we sought the support of a Social Worker who understood us and helped us in our needs. Thanks to the Social Worker we had better guidance about what services the Agency offers and a plan was prepared to address the needs of all the family. This was all explained to Alessandro in a way that he understands."

Antonella Farrugia, Alessandro's mum



"Thanks to the Social Worker I can plan and work better on my skills. The Social Worker also helped me to believe more in my potential."

Maris Aquilina, service user



Sharing Lives:

"When I attend the Sharing Lives art sessions, I do things that I didn't know how to do before. They taught me lots of techniques with the paintbrushes. I really enjoy attending!"

Rebecca Sammut, service user



"Through Sharing Lives, I meet with my friends, which I really like. We do lots of activities and we also attended some shows. I enjoy being with the volunteers too. They help us to learn new things and I would like to thank them."

Brandon Falzon, service user



"I started volunteering with the Sharing Lives service in June 2021. Sharing Lives gave me the opportunity to meet new people 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, volunteer

Supported Independent Living Services:

Design created by Martyn, service user





NAPPI

The NAPPI training

NAPPI training is based on positive behaviour support and the psychological support which needs to be given to persons with disabilities to reduce their need to participate in behaviours of concern. NAPPI recognises that behaviours of concern are either communication or reactions to possible triggers, and thus aims to avoid or decrease the presence of such triggers.

The understanding of the behaviour thus can help the personnel working with the person in question to identify the needs of such persons and fulfil their needs or reassure them thus reducing the need for challenging behaviours to manifest. Furthermore, NAPPI also teaches minimally invasive physical skills which need to be utilised as a last resort and with minimal impact when physical behaviours become dangerous to self or others.



20

NAPPI training modules were delivered in 2022, reaching 195 employees

2 new employees received training and 7 trainers attended refreshers' courses in the UK in 2022

NAPPI implementation

Throughout the years, Agenzija Sapport recognised the need for specialised training regarding dealing with behaviour of concern. This was initially tackled during 2019 whereby several trainers received ESF funding to be licenced as NAPPI Trainers. The year 2022 has been the initial year during which such training was being given at full force across the Agency.

Several service users also received intervention in line with building their individual Lalemand scale, which resulted in a very positive individual plan of action resulting in diminishing service users escalations of behaviours of concern, leading to a lesser need for admissions at Mount Carmel Hospital. It also led to enhanced dynamics between staff and service users. Post profiling / individual scale, training to the specific service in relation to working with a particular service user will also be delivered.

The awareness that the staff gathered through NAPPI regarding behaviour of concern gave them an enhanced ability to question the reasoning of the behaviour and to question what they could do, why it was not being done and how it could be affected.



PROJECTS

Maintenance interventions

The Maintenance team successfully increased its number of interventions in 2022 to 1,716 from 1,191 in 2021. Such interventions included complete refurbishment and upkeep of areas/sections within supported independent living facilities and day centres and full electrical installations.

776 interventions in supported independent living facilities
696 interventions in day centres
208 interventions in offices



Proġett Soċjetà Ġusta

The implementation of the Electoral Manifesto Proposal (EMP) no. 07.070 - Proġett Soċjetà Ġusta falls under the responsibility of Aġenzija Sapport. The Agency is tasked to construct and develop new supported independent living facilities for persons with disability within the community in accordance with highest international and CRPD guidelines.

1. Qrendi premises

A 4-storey corner apartment block in Qrendi aimed to host nine service users, has been structurally completed during the period under review.

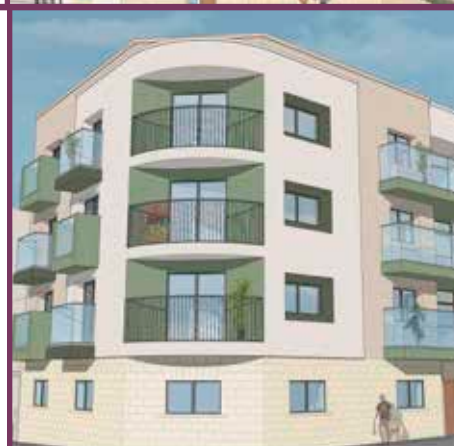
Final project costs	€1,350,000
Start date	Dec 2017
Completion date	Dec 2022



2. Kirkop premises

A site for a 4-storey corner apartment block in Kirkop aimed to host nine service users, with works envisaged to start in early 2023.

Estimated project costs	€1,400,000
Start date	Jan 2023
Estimated completion date	Jun 2024



3. Dingli premises

This project will see the conversion of a derelict building converted into a residential unit for four persons with disability.

Estimated project costs	€940,000
Start date	Nov 2023
Estimated completion date	Jun 2026



Major projects

1. Għajnsielem Learning Hub

During the year 2022, major works were carried out at the Għajnsielem Learning Hub in Gozo as part of a 3-year project to improve the current facilities and further development of the existing building. Such works included primarily the maintenance of the current used wing and improvement of facilities. Other embellishment works of the Hub planned for next year include trenching works for the reinstatement of electrical cables. Once completed, the Hub will host the Gozo Day Centre, a variety of Aġenzija Sapport services, Sapport Gozo offices and others.

Estimated project costs	€100,000 (for phase 1 in 2023)
Start date	Jun 2023
Estimated completion date	Dec 2023



2. Ġirasol – Community Hub

In line with Budget Measure 45, the Agency has been tasked to introduce facilities in the north of Malta where persons with disability from where they can receive specialised community-based programmes and training primarily related to independent living skills. Premises at Tal-Virtù area were identified and embellishment works were carried out to make the premises and facilities accessible for service users. Such works were initiated during the period under review, expected to be finalised in 2023.

Estimated contract value	€80,000
Start date	May 2022
Estimated completion date	Dec 2023



3. Maintenance Workshop

An unused part of the building in the Hal Far Day Centre grounds was targeted for conversion into a maintenance workshop. The building will serve not just as a workshop for the maintenance team within the Projects Department but also as a store.

Estimated contract value	€130,000
Start date	Oct 2022
Estimated completion date	Jun 2023



4. Vajrita Complex

Phase 1 (demolition stage) of the Vajrita Complex project was initiated in December 2021 and was fully completed in the year under review. Building permits were also issued in October 2022 and the next phase of works on this project involves excavation works planned to commence in 2023.

Estimated contract value €5,900,000

Estimated start date Oct 2023

Estimated completion date Nov 2026



5. Dar Andrew – Bormla

Civil works undertaken in 2022 included the construction of a washroom, replacing of apertures, construction of stairwell, plastering and painting of all the building, and the restoration of the main door and balcony.

Contract value €53,000

Start date Jan 2022

Completion date Oct 2022



6. Tiling Works

In year 2022, retiling works were commenced at the Mtarfa Resource Centre, following the successful adjudication of Tenders relating to the supply and laying of floor tiles in various premises of the Agency, which project is being carried out in phases.

Estimated contract value €97,200

Start date Nov 2022

Estimated completion date Nov 2023

7. Fleur-de-Lys Day Centre

Various works were carried out at this centre, including the installation of a bocce court and floodlight system, a multi-sensory room and upgrading of electrical supply system.

Contract value €154,660

Start date Jan 2022

Completion date Dec 2024



Minor projects

1. Supported Independent Living facilities

During the year under review, the Projects & Estate Management team was involved in carrying out various other projects, mainly refurbishment of the Agency's supported independent living premises.

€132,000

the total cost of minor projects in Sapport supported independent living premises in 2022

2. Modernisation and upgrading of day centres

EMP no. 07.078 – Modernisation of Day Centres is another EMP that has been tasked to Aġenzija Sapport to upgrade the Day Centres operated by Aġenzija Sapport around Malta and Gozo.

€285,000

the total cost of minor projects in Sapport day centres in 2022

3. Human Resources offices

Embellishment of a new floor at the Professional Development Centre to host the HR team.

Estimated contract value	€50,000
Start date	May 2022
Estimated completion date	Dec 2023

Way forward

Further projects are planned for 2023, including:

- Qrendi Pastoral Centre – refurbishment of the pastoral centre to serve as temporary premises and facilities for STILC and ACTU services.
- STILC – Works on an additional floor on STILC premises in Ħal Far to create more office space and clinics for the STILC and ACTU teams.
- Non-industrial kitchens – Replacement of kitchens in various day centres and supported independent living premises.





EU PROJECTS

The aim of the EU Projects Department within Agenzija Sapport is to tap into various EU funding programmes made available by the European Commission (EC), for the benefit of service users and employees. This is deeper than simply a financial contribution or support through which projects may be realised.

Through these different initiatives, Agenzija Sapport strives to develop projects that aim at fostering the below objectives, in line with Key Action 1 and Key Action 2 Priorities:

- Upskilling and providing opportunities to staff working within the Agency
- Enhancing client autonomy and independent living
- Delivering and ensuring a high-quality service of excellence
- Integrity, respect, equity, empathy and co-production

INK Project

INK Project was a person-focused inclusion project, co-funded by the European Union, under the European Social Fund 2014 – 2020, operated by Agenzija Sapport between January 2018 and June 2022. The project's aims were to enhance the quality of life of persons with disability through innovative and personalised support, expertise, and advocacy, maximise the abilities of clients along with receiving training and support, and working on the inclusion in the labour market by offering secure job placements and employment. The project strengthened the importance of social engagement by increasing participation in the community, encouraging social involvement and supporting the service users to improve their quality of life.



1,100
persons benefitted from
INK Project



€2.1m
were invested in the
INK Project during its
implementation

INK Project focused on a number of stages for the beneficiaries:

- Generic training including self-advocacy and self-care
- Training on independent living
- Digital literacy
- Employment training
- Transition training including orientation visits at the workplace
- Job placement that gave the beneficiaries hands-on experience accompanied by job mentors

The project's holistic approach also reached parents of persons with disability, professionals working in the disability sector and employers through training and information sessions complementing the programme received by persons with disability.

INK Project was awarded the Responsible and Inclusive Entrepreneurship Award during the National Supporting Business Awards 2021.



GOVERNMENT
OF MALTA

MINISTRY FOR MEDICINE,
VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS
AND CONSUMER RIGHTS
PARLAMENTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR EUROPEAN FUNDS



PROJECT PART-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION



Current projects

Key Action 1 Projects

1. New Horizons

An initiative that is aimed at equipping the Agency's frontliners with further and specialised training. Aģenzija Sapport has applied for this project as a lead partner, and together with Valga County Vocational Training Centre in Estonia, it has provide three training programmes in Estonia for 30 Support Workers and professionals.

2. New Mobility

Aģenzija Sapport has recently been granted approval by the EC to involve all members of staff who directly or indirectly deal with people with disability. Around 110 frontliners, including professionals, will receive the majority of opportunities, however the Agency will also identify other training opportunities to ensure the upskilling of the Agency as a whole.

Key Action 2 Projects

1. Hybrid Learning for Disadvantaged Adults

This project seeks solutions of hybrid learning for disadvantaged adults including migrants, the elderly and persons with disability. The project is led by OU Vestifex, Estonia, and has also included seven European partners. In this project, Aģenzija Sapport is mainly responsible for the creation of a hybrid toolkit which will serve as an online resource for adult learners. The Agency will also host the partners for a week-long study visit and it is also responsible for the evaluation of the project.

2. Beyond Disability

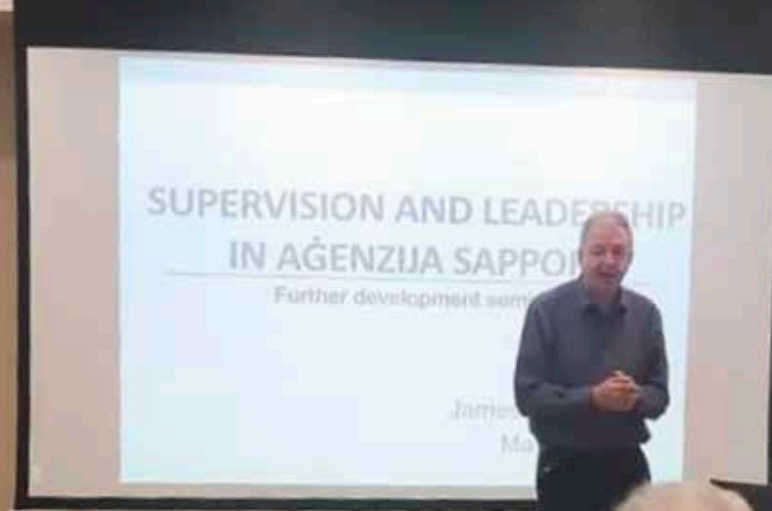
This project aims to bring together experience and expertise from across Europe to create a training programme aimed at professionals (namely Psychologists, Psychotherapists and Counsellors) in becoming better acquainted with the concept of disability, and working with persons with different abilities. The partnership for this project consists of Aģenzija Sapport, as applicant, Relate Ability Centre in Ireland and Igor Vitale International srl in Italy.

3. Inclusive Practices in Education – The emergence of the European Forum of Inclusion Practitioners

An initiative focused on inclusion practice, where schools, NGOs and other organisations will collaborate and share best practices. This project will enable professionals at Agenzija Sapport to collaborate with inclusion experts across Europe and strengthen their international network through the European Forum of the International Forums of Inclusion Practitioners. The project is led by the Union of Consultants Scandinavia AB in Sweden and it includes a number of European partners.

European Solidarity Corps

This is a European Volunteering Project through which Agenzija Sapport will be hosting two European volunteers for a period of one year to support its services. The project is led by the Agency's Sharing Lives Service, and thus, the volunteers will be supporting the Sharing Lives team and allowing it to potentially expand its operations.



HUMAN RESOURCES: PEOPLE MANAGEMENT & EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

Human Resources (HR) Department’s main purpose is to implement Agenzija Sapport’s strategy and objectives, by effectively managing its talent through best practice, HR policies and creating a psychologically safe working environment. This focus provides the impetus to develop clear strategies on people management and employee well-being in order to develop a dynamic workforce to meet the Agency’s needs.

The HR department manages the employee’s life cycle from recruitment until the employee retires or resigns, including the management of various functions related to onboarding, career development, performance, engagement, well-being, compensation and benefits.

Staff Complement

Male employees	140
Female employees	474
Total number of employees	614

Table 7: Agenzija Sapport staff complement as at 31st December 2022

32 internal calls and
25 external calls were
issued between January
and December 2022

Recruitment

As a public sector entity, the Agency follows the provisions of Directive 7.3 “Delegation of Authority to Effect Recruitment, Promotions and Industrial Relations in the Public Sector entities” for recruitment processes. Moreover, guidelines and best practices issued by the People and Standards Division are adopted to ensure fair and transparent processes based on the principle of meritocracy.



Occupation	Males	Females	Totals
Manager	1	0	1
Executive II (Finance)	1	0	1
Executive III (Support Executive)	5	10	15
Occupational Therapist	1	0	1
Social Workers	0	5	5
Administrative Support Worker	6	4	10
Driver	1	0	1
Full-time Support Workers	4	15	19
Part-time Support Workers	2	9	11
Students	11	12	23
Total	32	55	87

Table 8: New recruits (including replacements), January - December 2022

In line with the Protection of Minors' Act (POMA), Aġenzija Support makes sure that all employees recruited within the Agency get a POMA clearance. Such checks are logged with the Courts of Malta through the Agency's lawyer.

22 Expressions of Interest in relation to training and service delivery & 3 Expressions of Interest related to travelling duties abroad accompanying service users were issued in 2022.

Outreach meetings and consultation processes

The HR team is continuously involved in an outreach programme with the various teams, particularly within the services departments, to discuss emerging issues and staff concerns. Through these meetings, the HR Team also updates employees about new policies and procedures related to people management and employee well-being.

Employee well-being

The HR team facilitates psychological assistance to employees going through personal and work-related issues. These schemes include the Employee Assistance Programme and the Employee Support Programme. The team also takes an active role in referring and encouraging the use of these programmes to employees facing difficulties in their personal lives. 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.

Another edition of “Fuq Xogħolna b’Saħħitna” was also held during the months of October and November. The team coordinated a series of health screening sessions in collaboration with the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate which also provided useful information related to nutrition and healthy lifestyles. A number of free Pilates sessions were also offered to employees.

Work-life balance

Change in working hours: 53 requests were considered and approved
Reduced hours: 33 requests were considered and approved
Telework hours: 28 requests were considered and approved

Training and employee development

Throughout the period under review, the Department continued to invest in the Agency’s employees, by organising training and courses in line with the training needs identified with each department and unit. During the year 2022, 144 training opportunities were provided to a number of employees.

In addition to this, the HR Department also engages in an onboarding process for new recruits. Each new recruit is dedicated with individual time to sign the contract, read and sign the job description, fill in engagement forms, and also attends an introduction meeting with the HR personnel. Various induction training sessions are also organised throughout the year for new recruits. During the year 2022, 39 new employees received this training.

Training Fund: 26 applications were received for a cost of €6,176
Continuous Professional Development: 19 applications were received for a cost of €9,894
45 requests for Study Leave were received

Institute of Public Service Students

During the year 2022, 9 students were engaged through the Institute of Public Service.

“This experience has given me priceless valuable lessons. It has given me friendships, laughter, challenges, opportunities, and experiences which I will remember and cherish for a lifetime ... I have grown as a person through the experiences shared with my colleagues which have been insightful on the work-life reality”

Mattea Schembri, student

Digitilisation of processes

During the year under review, the HR Department has continued to digitalise its processes, focusing on time and attendance function at the Agency and the scanning of HR data.

A background image showing four business professionals (three women and one man) sitting around a white table in a modern office setting with large windows. They are looking at documents and a tablet, engaged in a meeting. The text 'LIAISON & RISK MANAGEMENT' is overlaid in large white letters.

LIAISON & RISK MANAGEMENT

Established in the first quarter of 2021, the Liaison and Risk Management Department was set up to oversee several sections under Agenzija Support to develop fluid communication methods, standardised procedures and risk management across the entity.

Having an eclectic portfolio, the small but committed Department, worked towards establishing sound relations, efficient systems and protocols to ensure all Agency stakeholders received high quality support and service from various avenues.

Risk management

A risk management framework was developed for Agenzija Support to identify, assess and manage risks that may prevent, or support, the achievement of strategic goals and objectives. This framework plays an integral part in ensuring good management practices and the provision of safe workplace environments, whilst consequently focusing on reaching aims, with a focus on the Agency's primary stakeholders: its service users.

Service licencing

As the liaison point between the Social Care Standards Authority and Agenzija Support, the Liaison and Risk Management Department assured the successful licencing renewals of more than 20 services throughout 2022, by ensuring timely administration, coordination of inspections and quality tools and monitoring recommendations and timely action to keep the Agency's services aligned with national standards.

Research

Throughout 2022, the department processed 38 research queries and requests. All applicants are provided with guidance and advice by the department to ensure ethically sound practices and designs that are in line with professional considerations.

Student placements

It is within the Agency's interest to provide placements which are hands-on and relevant to students from various academic institutions and programmes. The goal of such placements is to provide students with the knowledge, skills and experience to supplement courses within the Social Services, and to advance careers within the disability sector. Throughout 2022, the Liaison and Risk Management Department was responsible for coordinating 89 student placements within the Agency, for both national and international students, until handing this remit over to the Human Resources Department in the last quarter of 2022.

Customer care

Also responsible for front-desk operations of the Agency's Head Office, the Department developed and standardised the approach taken by customer care personnel to guarantee a pleasant, competent and satisfactory interaction from start to finish, whether over the phone, in person or via email correspondence. Continuous support, recruitment and training of its personnel, whilst listening to feedback provided by all stakeholders to continuously grow and improve, ensured improved service provision to the Agency's main contact points.

Way forward

In 2023, the Department will be restructured to form the Quality Audit, Research and Innovation Department, with a focus on:

- Establishing communication channels with stakeholders to ensure co-production at all stages of service development and review.
- Implementing quality assurance and service audit frameworks across the Agency to better serve its stakeholders.
- Strengthening and further developing risk culture within the Agency, securing all stakeholders alike.
- Increasing efficiency and standardising service licencing procedures.
- Enhancing its research and development procedures to ensure Agency strategies are compliant with best practices, ethics, legal frameworks and standards.



STRATEGIC MARKETING & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



**QUALITY OF LIFE
& SUPPORT SERVICES**

FROM WORDS TO ACTION

Strategic Marketing

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.

Major marketing milestones 2022

Campaigns

- Siblings
- Sharing Lives
- Blue Badge
- Positive Parenting
- Super Sibs
- Special Olympics Invitational Games
- EASPD Conference
- ACTU Conference
- Careers
- Day Centres Exhibition



**Agenzija Support Positive Parenting Skills Courses
for Parents of Children with Disability**

- 7 sessions of 2 hours - once a week
- Delivered online
- Attendance for these groups is free of charge



AGENZIJA SUPPORT

SUPER SIBS

Exciting summer programme
for children who have a
sibling with disability.

For children aged
between 8-13 years
Time: 10:30 - 11:00
once a week
FREE OF CHARGE
Deadline for applications:
31ST MARCH 2023

www.support.gov.mt

**HAVE
YOU EVER
THOUGHT OF
WHERE YOUR
STUDIES MAY
LEAD YOU?**







DONNALISE ELLUL
COUNCIL MEMBER OF ACCOUNTANTS MALTA
WORK FUTURE'S LEADERSHIP

“In my role I support the various Agency departments that will ultimately enhance the quality of life of persons with disability and their family members. Managing public funds requires transparency and accountability. With my financial knowledge and experience, I can also keep assisting Agenzija Support to continue achieving its vision to be the leader in guiding the community which promotes dignity rather than disability.”

www.support.gov.mt

Social media followers as at end December 2022

-  Facebook followers - **13,718**
-  Instagram followers – **1,035**
-  LinkedIn connections - **476**
-  Twitter followers - **90**

Website

116,470

page views between
January - December 2022



Media programmes

114 media programmes in 2022

January <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing of PSP with Inspire Foundation • Official visit to Qrendi premises 	February <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of Rabat Community Hub project • Signing of MOU with the Faculty of Dental Surgery, UOM 	March <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of Blue Badge service • Career expos • Launch of Dingli premises project • Launch of Dar Ġizimina – Żurrieq • Launch of Aġenzija Support Strategic Operational Plan 2022 – 2026 • Signing of MOU with the Malta Trust Foundation
June <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing of PSP with Dar tal-Providenza for Dar l-Akwarell • End of INK Project - certificate-giving event for last cohort of participants • Official visit to Għajnsielem Learning Hub 	July <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing of agreement with Embrace • Signing of agreement with Voice for Inclusion • Hal Far Day Centre works 	August <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing of MOU with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing
September <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of Way to Work Programme 	October <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshers' Week • EASPD international conference Quality of Life & Support Services: from words to action 	December <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing of MOU with the Housing Authority

International Relations

The International Relations function within Agenzija Sapport oversees the networking of the organisation with other international stakeholders, associations and professional bodies with the possibility of enhancing collaborations, share best practices and engage experts for training purposes, among others.

Major achievements 2022

- International conference in collaboration with the European Association EASPD
- New representations on EASPD Inclusive Living Member Forum and Early Childhood Intervention Member Forum
- Further representation on EASPD Person-Centred Technology Member Forum
- Further online and in-person opportunities for staff and networking for sharing of best practices

Main international opportunities attended by Agenzija Sapport employees in 2022

- 15th Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (COSP15) hosted by General Assembly of the United Nations held in New York
- 13th Autism-Europe International Congress, Krakow
- Adaptive Driving Training, Birmingham, UK
- AIAS Bologna Collaboration Visit, Bologna, Italy
- Communication Matters Conference, UK
- EASPD Helpline Desk Launch Event, Brussels
- EASPD - The Future of the Right to Work Conference, Zagreb
- EASPD EURECO Forum – taskforce on drafting of an EU Framework on Social Services of Excellence for persons with disabilities, Brussels
- ESN Working Group on Transformation and Resilience of Social Services, Madrid
- Presentation of ESN European Award for Excellency 2021, Brussels

- ESN conference – Rethinking Recover: Reshaping the Social Services with New Tools, Hamburg
- Joint International Conference on Digital Inclusion, Assistive Technology and Accessibility ICCHP-AAATE conference, Lecco, Italy
- Study visit on Architecture, Supported Decision-making & Crisis Handling in Autism, Girona, Spain
- Sydney Disability Expo, Australia
- Career Expo, Birmingham, UK





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.

As defined by the financial results of the year, it is evident that the Agency continues to grow both in the number of services it provides as well as its resource capacity. During the year under review, the Agency experienced an increase in requests from service users who required home care and community services as well as equipment for persons with disability. As a result, the operational expenditure increased, as well as that of a capital nature. Supported Independent Living facilities and day centres continued to prove to be a daily challenge to operate, which in turn necessitated strong financial decisions to ensure the safety and well-being of the service users.

In line with its strategic plan, the Agency required a new injection of funds and increased financial governance. This entailed that the Finance Department manages its finances more efficiently and effectively, in an accountable and transparent manner ensuring quality services and value for money.

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 2022, €29.7 million were received in government grants, programmes and initiatives and capital grants. This was a substantial investment by the Government in this sector and equates to a 12% increase over the previous year.

	2020	2021	2022
Government subvention	€18,370,770	€20,530,000	€22,000,000
Other grants	€4,895,701	€6,114,443	€7,767,460
Total	€23,266,471	€26,644,443	€29,767,460

Table 9: Government subvention and other grants, 2020 – 2022

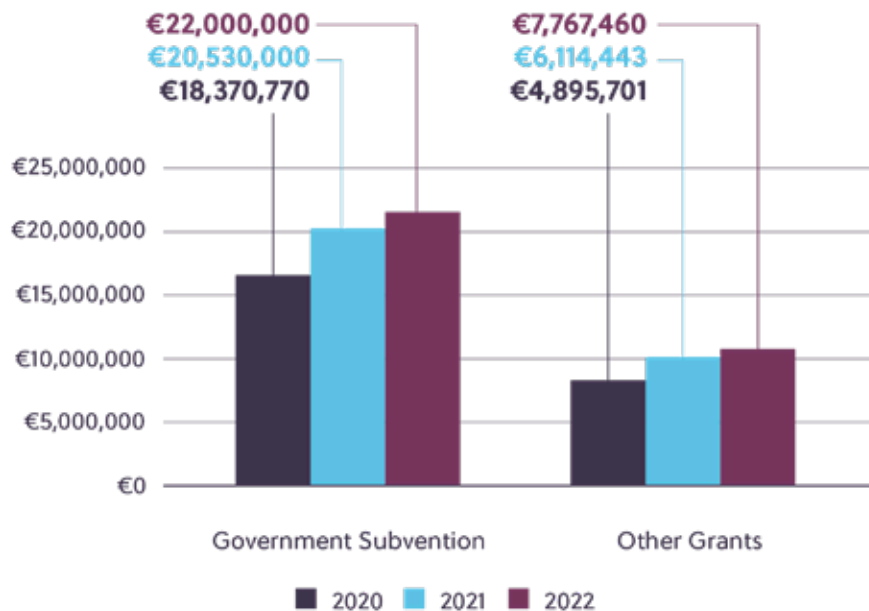


Figure 2: Government subvention and other grants, 2020 - 2022

Recurrent expenditure

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

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

Operational expense for years 2021 and 2022 as per Figure 3 below, shows the main expenses being that of payroll, transport and service user schemes.

In 2022, operational expense increased by 15% with the most significant increase being in the community service user schemes for personal assistance and equipment. Payroll increased by 11% due to Collective Agreement increase provisions and increments as well as additional recruitment of several professionals and other frontliners in the field. Transport costs were back to pre-pandemic levels, with specialised outsourced expenses increasing as well due to service expansion and increased rates. Investments were also made in new IT systems to assist professionals and staff with recording the apposite data on the Agency’s service users. Implementation of the Budget Measures continued through ring-fenced funding.

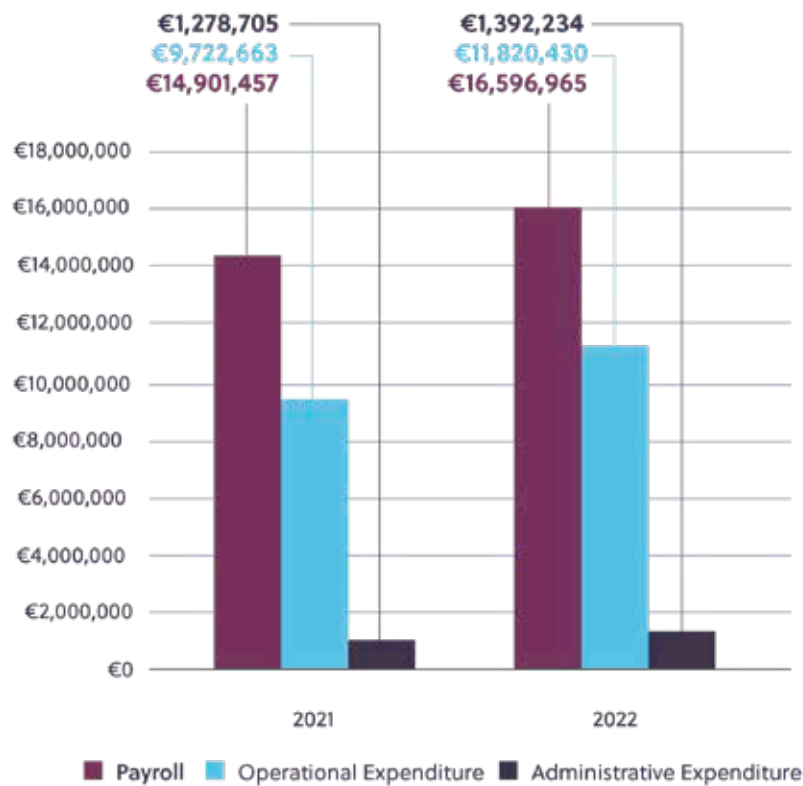


Figure 3: Recurrent expenditure, 2021 - 2022

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

Expansion of Finance Department

During the year, the Finance Department grew in capacity with the inclusion of the Procurement Unit and ICL Finance unit due to an internal reorganisation. The amalgamation of these units with the Finance Department will ensure added internal controls over fund disbursement and procurement regulations.

Capital expenditure

The Agency, through capital grants obtained from the Government, continued to invest in its asset base through the completion of the Qrendi premises and works on the Vajrita project in Marsascala. Financial commitments are in place to complete a number of other projects across the Malta and Gozo. A number of other smaller projects were carried out during the year to embellish the Agency's properties and update equipment.

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