

10 Years of Maltese Sign Language Recognition, 20 Years of the CRPD

Celebrating Deaf Identity, Language, and Human Rights

SIDE-EVENT

19TH CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CRPD

July
17

Date

Thursday, 11th June 2026



Time

1.15pm – 2.30pm



Venue

Conference Room 6, UN HQ New York

About This Event

A Landmark Occasion

This side-event brings together Deaf leaders, advocates, interpreters, and human rights experts from across the globe to mark two historic milestones: a decade of official recognition of Maltese Sign Language, and two decades since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Why It Matters

Sign language recognition is not merely a linguistic achievement — it is a human rights victory. When a sign language receives official status, Deaf communities gain legal protections, access to education, media, public services, and the right to participate fully in civic life.

This event celebrates progress, reflects on challenges, and charts the path forward for Deaf communities worldwide.

10

Years of LSM Recognition

Maltese Sign Language officially recognised by Parliament

20

Years of the CRPD

The landmark UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

9

Expert Panellists

Deaf professionals, advocates, and allies from around the world

Meet the Chair



CHAIR

Dr. Joseph J. Murray

**President, World Federation of the Deaf | Board Member,
International Disability Alliance**

Dr. Murray brings over 25 years of international disability rights experience, having worked as an adviser for NGOs and Deaf and disability communities in more than 50 countries. Most recently, he served as a member of the official Norwegian government commission for sign language.

He is Professor of Deaf Studies at Gallaudet University and has published widely in human rights, linguistic rights, Deaf studies, and applied linguistics.

Panellists from Malta

Three distinguished Maltese Deaf professionals and allies who have been instrumental in advancing Maltese Sign Language recognition, education, and community representation.



Annabelle Xerri

President, Deaf People Association Malta | Chairperson, Maltese Sign Language Council

A Deaf professional with expertise in communications, disability rights, and advocacy. Holds a Bachelor's in Communications, with a minor in Psychology, and a Master's in Disability Studies.

Since 2020, she has served as President of the Deaf People Association Malta and is also Chairperson of the Maltese Sign Language Council.

She lectures in disability and inclusive education, and is developing children's books in Maltese featuring a Deaf main character to promote representation and inclusion.



Dorianne Callus

Banking Coordinator, Educator & LSM Broadcaster | Board Member, Maltese Sign Language Council

Born profoundly Deaf, Dorianne has built a distinguished career across banking, education, media, and advocacy.

She is a dedicated educator, teaching Maltese Sign Language at the University of Malta, and within the Department for Lifelong Learning.

Dorianne has broadcast news in Maltese Sign Language on TVMNews+ for 28 years and played an important role in discussions leading to the official recognition of Maltese Sign Language in Parliament.



Sharon Mifsud

Senior Sign Language Interpreter, Aġenzija Support | President, Association of Maltese Sign Language Interpreters

Sharon holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting and an MSc in Disability Studies.

She is a Senior Sign Language Interpreter at Aġenzija Support, which is the national agency in Malta responsible for providing services to persons with disabilities.

Sharon began her professional journey with the Deaf People Association Malta in 2006 and advocates for professional standards, recognition, and the advancement of interpreting services in Malta.

Loran Ripard Xuereb



MALTA

DEAFBLIND PROFESSIONAL

A Celebration of Maltese Sign Language (LSM)

Loran Ripard Xuereb is a DeafBlind professional from Malta working full-time as a government land surveyor and as a teacher of Maltese Sign Language. He serves as a board member of the Maltese Sign Language Council and Vice-President of the Deaf People Association Malta.

At European level, Loran contributes as a volunteer member of the Ombuds Committee of the European Union of the Deaf Youth and as a board member of the European DeafBlind Union Youth.

International Panellists

Perspectives from Ireland, Mongolia and the global disability rights movement.



Lianne Quigley — Ireland
Chairperson, Irish Deaf Society (IDS)

Lianne holds a BA (Hons) in Business, Economics and Social Studies from Trinity College Dublin and a Certificate in Equality Studies for Deaf People from University College Dublin.

She was co-chairperson of the Irish Sign Language (ISL) Recognition Campaign and is a Deaf interpreter with CPD in Deaf Interpreting from the Centre for Deaf Studies at Trinity College Dublin.

Lianne is a member of the ISL Act Cross Community group and a representative for IDS on Ireland's DPO network.



Dulamsuren (Duya) Jigjid — Mongolia
Executive Director, Culture Centre of the Deaf | Independent Board Member, CBM Global

A Deaf cultural practitioner, film producer, and disability rights advocate.

Previously served as Asia Fellow for the Disability Reference Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (DRG) at IDA, and as a Board Member of the World Federation of the Deaf.

She leads local trainings on Disaster Risk Reduction for Deaf communities across Mongolia and in 2026 will implement a KODDI-funded Training of Trainers programme focused on DRR for Deaf women.



Sofia Isari
President, European Union of the Deaf (EUD)

A recognised expert in early childhood and kindergarten education for Deaf children.

Sofia brings extensive expertise in the role of sign languages in the linguistic, cognitive, and social development of Deaf learners, as well as in bilingual and sign-language-based educational models.

Through her leadership at EUD, she contributes expert knowledge at the European and international level on sign language rights, education policy, and the structural inclusion of national sign languages within education systems.

Dr. Elizabeth Lockwood

GLOBAL DISABILITY RIGHTS

UN REPRESENTATIVE

CBM Global's Representative at the United Nations

Dr. Elizabeth Lockwood develops advocacy strategies to raise awareness, strengthen capacity, and lobby for the rights of persons with disabilities in partnership with organisations of persons with disabilities. She co-leads the UN Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities' data work, with a focus on inclusive development, accessibility, and data.

Dr. Lockwood was raised by Dutch and American parents and has lived and worked in North America, Central America, South America, Europe, Asia, and on the Navajo Nation. She holds a Ph.D. in Disability Studies and a Master of Public Policy, signs in multiple sign languages and International Sign, and speaks English and Spanish.



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Join the Conversation

Sign language recognition is not the end of the journey — it is the beginning of a new chapter in the struggle for full equality, dignity, and inclusion for Deaf people everywhere.



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Side-Event

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