

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



MALTA
PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE



FORWARD

It is our privilege to be presenting you with the fourth Annual Report of the Malta Paralympic Committee (MPC), covering the period from **1 January 2022** to **31 December 2022**.

In this Annual Report we reflect on the first year of the 2022-2024 Paralympic cycle. Following the pledge made by the MPC to build on the legacy of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games and inspire the next generation of upcoming Para athletes, 2022 was characterised by a series of initiatives relating to our core pillars of **Para Sport Development, Education** and **Community Engagement**. Against this backdrop, in 2022 the MPC sought to develop long-lasting and sustainable relations with various organisations in the sport, disability, and educational sectors, embarking on new or strengthening existing collaborations with a diverse range of national sports associations, sports clubs, coaches, stakeholders and public institutions, private entities, and non-profit organisations. This collaborative model was the hallmark of 2022, aimed at further strengthening the network and reach of MPC and supporting a more effective use of MPC's limited resources and enabling a multiplier effect.

2022 saw the accomplishment of an array of **milestones** for MPC, with MPC having ventured into new uncharted waters, such as its ISPORT Project on VI Para sport (sport for the blind and visually impaired), its national classifiers project, the implementation of the educational I'mPOSSIBLE programme, and the growth of Para sport into new disciplines such as Para rowing, Para shooting, Para darts and even Para sailing.

Finally, following the lifting of the Covid-19 restrictions in Malta and overseas, in 2022 we witnessed the return of a more fulsome **Para sports events and competition calendar**, with Maltese Para athletes competing in several local and international Para sport competitions in Para athletics, Para swimming, Wheelchair basketball, Para darts, Para shooting, and Para rowing, among others, with newcomers participating in such competitions for the first time. The MPC also notes with satisfaction that **new Para athletes** took up a Para sport(s) in 2022 - an encouraging trend that demonstrates the changing perception towards individuals with disabilities in sport, including the positive shift in the approach of sports clubs, coaches, and other entities towards **inclusion** of Para athletes within a sporting and social environment that brings together able-bodied athletes and Para athletes. The MPC reiterates its belief that such an integrated environment is the way forward when it comes to reaping the benefits of Para sport, both for the individual Para athletes concerned and for the wider sporting community.

The members of the Executive Committee express their sincere gratitude towards all those sports associations, clubs, coaches, Para athletes, parents, sports stakeholders (including, in particular, Sport Malta, the Maltese Olympic Committee, the Ministry for Education and Sport, the Ministry for Inclusion and Voluntary Organisations, the Malta Council for Voluntary Services, sports journalists and the independent media), educational institutions, project sponsors, private and public sector organisations, NGOs and other entities and individuals with whom MPC have collaborated with, for their support and contribution towards Para sport in 2022. In **2023**, Malta Paralympic Committee will be celebrating its **fifth-year anniversary** - its aim is simple, to continue to realise its ethos of **Inclusion meets Excellence** and attain new heights in Maltese Para sport.

Yours sincerely,

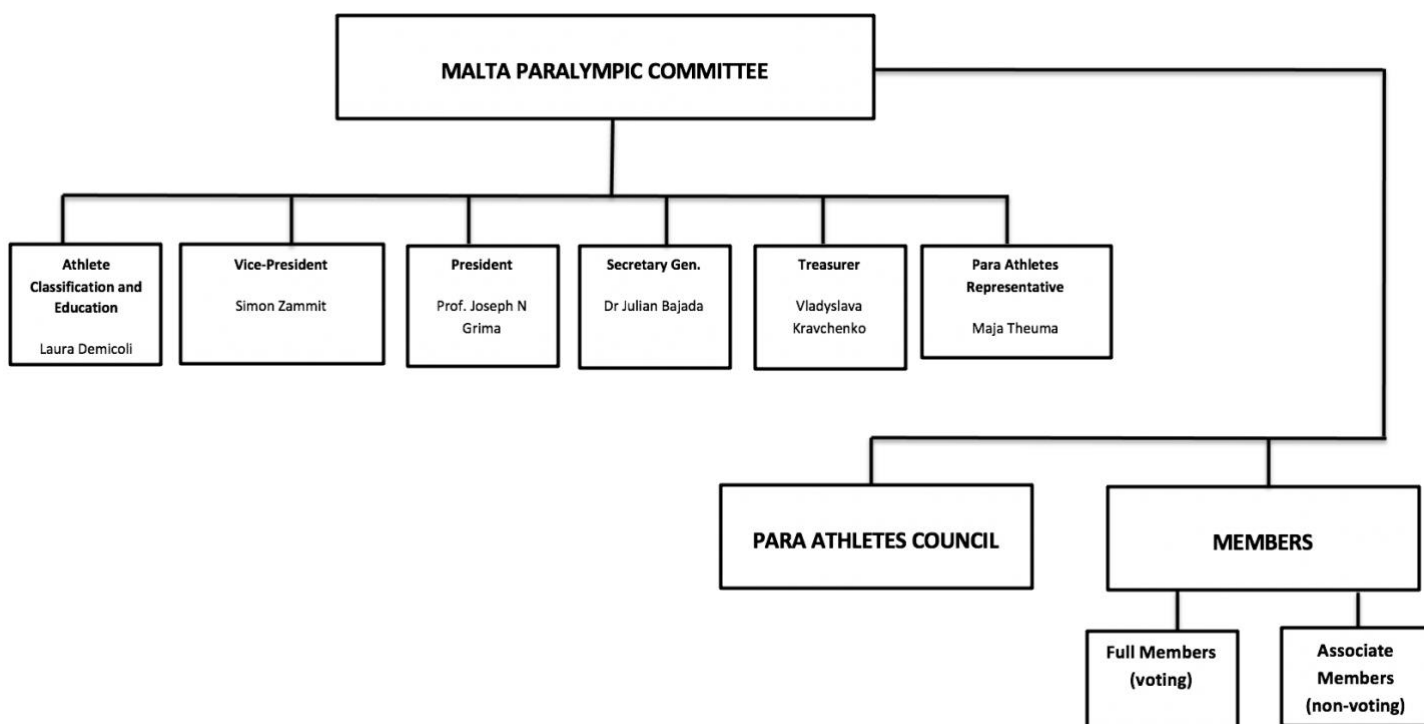
Executive Committee of the Malta Paralympic Committee

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1. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MPC

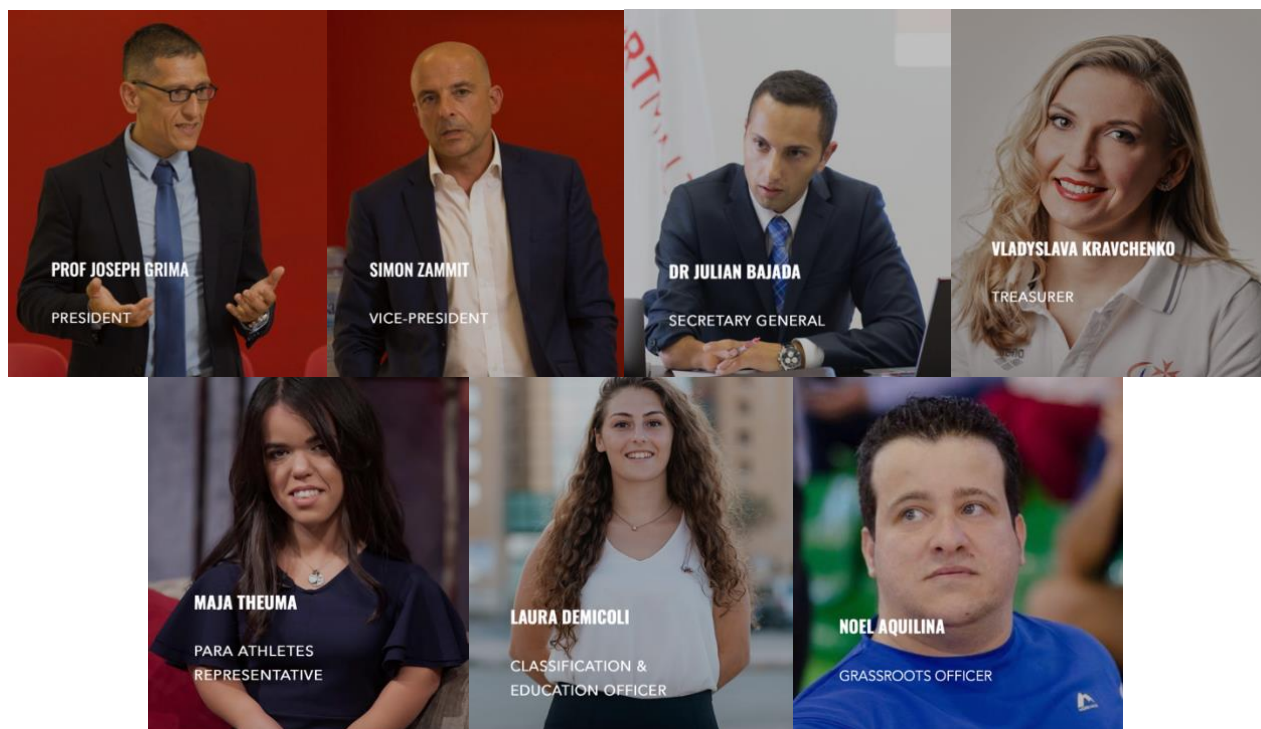
1.1 Organisational Structure



1.1.1 Executive Committee elected at 2022 Annual General Meeting

Responsible for *day-to-day* management and operations of the Malta Paralympic Committee, the current Executive Committee was elected by the unanimous vote of the voting members present at the second Elective Annual General Meeting held on 7 January 2022, to serve for a 3-year term between 2022-to 2024. No changes were made to the composition of the Executive Committee in 2022.

The present members of the Executive Committee:



A spotlight on diversity and inclusion at execute level: in line with the MPC's statute and its belief in strength in diversity, the Executive Committee's composition has attained quasi-parity in gender balance amongst its members (40% female: 60% male). Moreover, the Executive Committee ranks well in term of the depth of its Para athlete representation, with four members of the current Executive Committee being active Para athletes, representing three Para sports.

1.1.2 Members

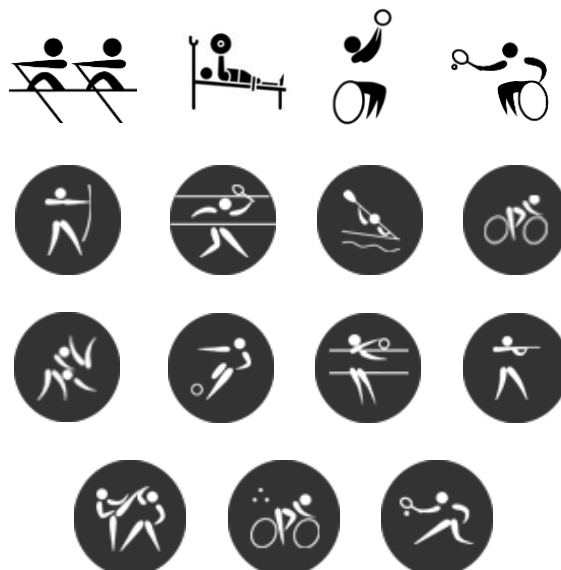
In terms of the statute of the Malta Paralympic Committee, membership is divided into **Full Membership** and **Associated Membership**. Full Membership is reserved for national sports associations and federations governing a Para sport on the Paralympic Programme, whereas Associated Membership is available for national sports associations and federations governing a Para sport not on the Paralympic programme, and other entities and individuals, such as honorary members.

The members of the MPC as at 31 December 2022 are listed hereunder, totalling 26 members across both categories:

Full Members (16 members):

- Malta Archery Association
- Malta Badminton Association
- Malta Canoeing Association
- Malta Cycling Federation
- Malta Judo Federation

- Mata Football Association
- ParaVolley Malta
- Malta Shooting Sport Federation
- Malta Rowing Association
- Malta Taekwondo Association
- Malta Triathlon Federation
- Malta Table Tennis Association
- Malta Tennis Federation
- Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association
- Malta Powerlifting Association



Associated Members (10 members):

- Athletics Malta
- Aquatic Sports Association of Malta
- Malta Darts Association
- Malta Deaf Sports
- Malta Handball Association
- Frame Football Malta Association
- Futsal Malta Association
- Malta Sailing Federation
- Malta Wheelchair Dancesport Association
- Malta Weightlifting Association



This membership and organisational governance structure mirrors the structure of the International Paralympic Committee and was approved by the International Paralympic Committee in June 2018.

1.1.3 Para Athletes Council:

The Para Athletes Council is the collective voice of Para athletes, acting as a consultative body providing advice, feedback, and support to the Executive Committee of the Malta Paralympic Committee, ensuring that the interests of Para athletes are placed at its epicentre. The Para Athletes Council meets regularly to discuss the challenges and opportunities for Para athletes and to propose solutions. At the elective AGM of the MPC held in January 2022, the following Para athletes were nominated to serve on the Para Athletes Council for the 2022-2024 term:

- **Maja Theuma** (Chairperson, Para swimming)
- **Bradley Zerafa** (Member, Wheelchair basketball)
- **Antonio Flores** (Member, Para athletics)
- **JeanFred Agius** (Member, Para calisthenics)
- **Nick Mercieca** (Para karate, Para rowing)
- **Emma Cusens** (Para swimming)
- **Kurt Farrugia** (Para rowing)
- **Thomas Borg** (Para athletics)

In accordance with the statute of the MPC, Maja Theuma was simultaneously appointed to the Executive Committee of the MPC, as the Para Athlete Representative.

In 2022, the Para Athletes Council was mandated with the task of organising the first ever **Para Athletes Forum**. A working group of Para athletes was brought together and entrusted with formulating the programme of activities and objectives of the Para Athletes Forum. The forum is expected in mid-2023.

1.2 Status of MPC as a Voluntary Organisation and Sports Association

The Malta Paralympic Committee is a non-profit and independent entity, registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations as a voluntary organisation (VO/1616) and registered as a Sports Association with SportMalta (No.SM/A170). Through these enrolments, the MPC endeavours to always act in a most transparent manner, as required by Maltese law, for the benefit of its athletes and members and based on principles of good governance, integrity and disclosure.

The MPC has maintained its banking relationship with Bank of Valletta p.l.c., and the MPC holds a current deposit account with Bank of Valletta p.l.c. Further financial information may be found in the Annual Accounts of the MPC for the financial year ended 31 December 2022.

1.3 Good Governance and Organisational Measures

In the spirit of ensuring that the MPC's activities are carried out based on principles of good governance premised on transparency and accountability, the MPC adopts various organisational measures aimed at attaining this objective, including, among other measures:

- emails addressed to the official email account of the MPC (maltaparacom@gmail.com) are automatically forwarded to all members of the Executive Committee, ensuring full visibility on all communications related to the MPC.
- meetings with external entities or organisations are attended by a minimum of two members of the Executive Committee (or, in the alternative, a member of the Executive Committee together with an individual delegated to represent the MPC in respect of the specific project or matter concerned).
- minutes of meetings (including physical, virtual and/or hybrid meetings) are promptly circulated to all members of the Executive Committee, clearly delineating the matters discussed, follow-up actions, and matters requiring further discussion or approval, as applicable). Responsibility for follow-up actions is allocated appropriately.
- expenditure of MPC funds is subject to the prior written approval of at least the President, Secretary General and Treasurer, acting jointly. Expenditure above certain thresholds is further subject to approval by majority of the members of the Executive Committee.
- operating on the equal opportunities' basis, that is, opportunities brought to the attention of the MPC via internal or external stakeholders are made available to our external stakeholders (where appropriate), without distinction or discrimination. This ensures that our external stakeholders are afforded equal access to information relevant to their activities and an equal opportunity to participate in activities of the MPC, or to avail themselves of opportunities (such as Para sport training or development opportunities) that are relevant to them.

In addition, as part of its transparency and accountability measures, the Annual Report and Annual Accounts of the MPC are published on its website, available on <https://www.maltapara.com/news>.

You are invited to read the MPC's Annual Accounts for further information on the financial performance and position of the MPC for the financial year ended 31 December 2022.

1.4 Appointment of external accountant in respect of MPC's annual accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2022

In terms of the legislation and regulations applicable to voluntarily organisations (namely the Voluntary Organisations Act, Chapter 492 of the laws of Malta, and subsidiary legislation S.L. 492.2 Annual Returns and Annual Accounts Regulations issued thereunder), the MPC was subject to the requirement to appoint an independent external certified accountant for the purposes of verifying and signing its annual accounts for the financial year ended 2022. Specifically, in terms of Schedule 1 to subsidiary legislation 492.2., in 2022 MPC became a Category 2 voluntary organisation on the ground that that the income of the MPC generated between 1 January 2022 and 31 December 2022, exceeded €50,000 but did not exceed €250,000.

In view of this requirement, the MPC made enquiries with potential candidates qualified to as an independent external certified accountant. After due and careful consideration of the potential candidates, and after having ensured an absence of any conflicts of interests or other circumstances that may impede or otherwise adversely affect the independence of the proposed accountant(s), the Executive Committee of the MPC approved the engagement of Mr. Stephen Paris to provide verification services required in respect of its annual accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2022. The engagement is not automatically renewable, and the services shall be provided to the MPC solely in respect of the annual accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2022, for a fixed fee.

The appointment of Mr. Stephen Paris in respect of the annual accounts of the MPC for the year ended 31 December 2022 was made by the Executive Committee pursuant to its authority to make such appointment in accordance with section 14.1 (f) of the statute of the MPC. However, the Executive Committee will be providing its members with an opportunity to ratify this appointment at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting of the MPC to be held in 2023.

1.5 International and European Paralympic Committee membership

1.5.1 Status of IPC and EPC Membership

The Executive Committee works closely with the International Paralympic Committee to ensure that Malta enjoys the benefits of full membership within the **International Paralympic Committee (IPC)**, as well as the **European Paralympic Committee (EPC)**. Such memberships ensure that MPC is recognised world-wide as the national entity responsible for Paralympic sport in Malta.

The **IPC** international governing body of the Paralympic Movement. Its purpose is to organise the summer and winter Paralympic Games and to act as the International Federation for ten sports, supervising and coordinating World Championships and other competitions. It is run as a non-profit

organisation based in Bonn, Germany and aims to develop sports opportunities for all people with an impairment from the beginner to elite level.

Founded on 22 September 1989 as an international non-profit organisation, the IPC is an athlete-centred organisation composed of an elected Governing Board, a management team and various Standing Committees and Councils. Since 1999 the IPC has been headquartered in Bonn, Germany. The membership of the IPC draws together National Paralympic Committees (NPCs), International Federations (IFs), Regional Organisations and International Organisations of Sports for the Disabled (IOSDs).

The commitment and obligations of these members forms part of the IPC Handbook, the Paralympic Movement's ultimate reference document and framework for Para Sport governance. Further information on the International Paralympic Committee is available on:

<https://www.paralympic.org/ipc/who-we-are>.



**INTERNATIONAL
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COMMITTEE**

On its part, the **EPC** is an international non-for-profit organisation which serves a membership of 49 National Paralympic Committees and 9 European branches of disability. Based in Vienna, Austria, the EPC's mission is to promote and contribute to the development of Para Sport opportunities and competitions for European Athletes with a disability as part of the world Paralympic Movement and to ensure the growth and strength of the Paralympic Movement through the development of the European National Paralympic Committees and to support the activities of all EPC members.

The vision of the EPC is to be the pioneer region in the Paralympic Movement in relation to the development and promotion of sports for European Athletes with a disability and EPC should be known as the pioneer region where the European Athletes with a disability and the Sports are the focus and drive in everything that is done in EPC. The EPC aims are to provide sports programs and initiatives for sports for persons with a disability for example by holding a Paradisability European Youth Games each second year and to increase the participation rates in a sport in the less Economically Affluent zones of Europe. The strategy is also to increase participation rates of women in sport throughout Europe. Further information on the European Paralympic Committee is available on:

<https://www.europaralympic.org/about-us>

**EUROPEAN
PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**



1.5.2 Benefits of IPC and EPC Membership

The MPC's membership with the IPC was officially ratified In November 2019 at the 30th General Assembly of the IPC held in Bonn, Germany. MPC automatically become a member of the EPC following its ratification of IPC membership. In practice, this membership translates into several benefits, including:

- Eligibility of national Para athletes for international IPC Classification
- Eligibility to compete at IPC and EPC approved competitions

- Eligibility to compete at the Paralympic Games and EPC accredited competitions
- Access to funding through the Agitos Foundation and other international partners
- Collaboration with other National Paralympic Committees
- Assistance with Para sport development
- Access to educational, awareness and development programmes

1.5.3 IPC National Development Programme Grant 2022/2023

In 2022, MPC was allocated a grant pursuant to the **IPC' 2022 NPCDP (National Paralympic Committees Development Programme)**. The NPCDP, made possible through the Worldwide Paralympic Partnership of the IPC with Toyota Motor Company, is aimed at supporting National Paralympic Committees in the priority areas of:

- **Organisational development:** strengthening NPCs as active and transparent entities that develop Para Sport and promote the Paralympic Movement's aspiration for a more inclusive society.
- **Sport development:** increasing the quality and quantity of sport technical personal required to produce top quality Para athletes and close the gaps in Para sport participation in terms of gender, age, sport, and impairment.

The MPC will be seeking to deploy the grant allocated under this development grant to support its initiatives in education, awareness, and Para sport development. This may include utilisation of the grant across the I'mPOSSIBLE Education Programme 2022/2023, the organisation of a Para Sports Festival or Para Sport Open Day (or similar activity), and the organisation of technical sports development programmes aimed at empowering coaches and technical officials to enhance the know-how of local personnel in Para sport. The funds may also be utilised for marketing activities. Further details on the use of funds allocated under this grant will be provided in the financial statements of the MPC for the year ending 31 December 2023, upon completion of the grant activities and submission of the requisite project reports to the IPC.

Further information about the development and support initiatives of the IPC may be found on the 'Development' sub-page on the official website of the IPC on: <https://www.paralympic.org/agitos-foundation>.

1.5.4 IPC Membership Gathering and Extraordinary General Assembly 2022

MPC participated in the IPC's three-day **Membership Gathering and Extraordinary General Assembly 2022**, held in Berlin between the 16th-18th November 2022. Bringing together 125 member organisations, the IPC hosted representatives from the National Paralympic Committees, International Federations, Regional Organisations, and the International Organisations of Sport for the Disabled, and World Para Sports gathered in the German capital.

During this event, participants engaged in discussions and workshops on key issues such as the IPC Governance Review, the IPC Classification Code Review and the IPC Strategic Plan, the latter setting the IPC's roadmap and focus areas of activity through to 2026. Participants engaged in knowledge-sharing and best practices across the Paralympic Movement, whilst also providing an international networking opportunity to build and strengthen relations amongst member organisations. In

particular, the members engaged in workshops relating to organisational capacity, regional development, leadership and mentorship, and activation of the IPC's Para sport development and pathway programmes, amongst other topics.

On its part, the MPC was represented by its Secretary General, Julian Bajada, who presented on Para sport development and Para athlete engagement in Malta. Furthermore, Julian Bajada participated in a panel session on athlete representation alongside **Majid Rashid** (President, Asian Paralympic Committee, and IPC Governing Board member) and **Birgit Skarstein** (Member of the IPC Athletes' Council). The session was facilitated by IPC CEO, **Mr. Mike Peters** and focused on Para athlete representation within member organisations. This was the first time that MPC was invited by the IPC to present to the membership at its Membership Gathering. During the Extraordinary General Assembly 2022, the Member organisations voted to suspend the National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) of Russia and Belarus. The decision stems from their inability to comply with their membership obligations under the IPC Constitution. This includes the obligations to *"ensure that, in Para sport within the Paralympic Movement, the spirit of fair play prevails, the safety and health of the athletes are protected, and fundamental ethical principles are upheld"* and *"not to do anything (by act or omission) that is contrary to the purpose or objects of the IPC and/or that risks bringing the IPC, the Paralympic Movement, or Para sport into disrepute."*



Photo credits: International Paralympic Committee

2. EDUCATION & AWARENESS

One of the principal focus areas of the MPC during 2021 was the strengthening of its educational, outreach and awareness initiatives. The MPC believes that through its initiatives in this area, the development of local Para sport will be supported by:

- *Raising awareness on Para sport and its benefits*
- *Integrating Para sport into holistic patient care (from rehabilitative to preventative care)*
- *Guiding individuals with a congenital physical impairment, or individuals who suffered traumatic incidents resulting in a physical impairment (ex. amputation or spinal cord injury)*
- *Developing local expertise in Para sport and classification*
- *Creating a collaborative network between the MPC and the medical and healthcare community*
- *Performance testing and evaluation for competitive Para athletes*
- *Expertise in adaptive equipment (prosthesis, etc.)*

Some of the initiatives pursued by the MPC on this front include joint projects between:

2.1 I'MPOSSIBLE PROGRAMME

Following up on the preparatory work carried out in 2021, the MPC implemented phase 1 of the **I'mPOSSIBLE Education Programme** over the course of the 2021/2022 scholastic year.

The programme was implemented across the primary and secondary year groups at **San Andrea School (Mgarr), St. Monica School Gzira, St. Monica School Birkirkara** and **St. Catherine's School (Pembroke)**. In addition, discussions were initiated with **St. Aloysius Primary School** and **St. Aloysius Secondary School**, with a view to commencing programme activities as from the second term of the 2021/2022 scholastic year.

The programme is being coordinated by **Rachel Bonett** and **Antonello Calleja** on behalf of the MPC, both of whom have successfully completed the I'mPOSSIBLE Educator's Course conducted by the International Paralympic Committee in 2021.

The I'mPOSSIBLE Programme is a global educational programme spearheaded by the International Paralympic Committee, which seeks to raise awareness on Paralympic sport and to instil the **Paralympic values** of **#courage**, **#determination**, **#equality** and **#inspiration** among school children. Some of the programme activities carried out at the participating schools in 2022 included:

- Introductory and training sessions delivered by the I'mPOSSIBLE Educators to teachers and PE teachers directly involved in the delivery of the theoretical and practical sessions during classroom lessons and PE lessons.



- During the first term, lessons were delivered by PSCD teachers to all classes, covering the following topics of the I'mPOSSIBLE lesson plan:
 - *The Paralympic Games. What are they?*
 - *The Paralympic Values?*
 - *A Para athlete is coming to town*
- Para athletes **Maja Theuma** (Para Swimming), **Thomas Borg** (Para Athletics), **Antonio Flores** (Para Athletics) and **Julian Bajada** (Para Swimming and Para Rowing) held presentations and talks with over **600** primary and secondary year students at St. Monica School Gzira, St. Monica School Birkirkara, St. Catherine's School (Pembroke) and San Andrea School (Mgarr). The presentations focused on sharing their own experience in Para sport and how to live the Paralympic values in our daily lives. In preparation for the visits, the students created several drawings and other craft based on the Paralympic values and Para athletes. These presentations proved to be very fruitful and had a significant impact on students and teachers alike at all the schools. In this respect, the presenting Para athletes noted that the students not only showed enthusiasm, interest, and intrigue about the presentations, but also demonstrated a very good understanding of the materials taught in the theoretical lessons that had been delivered during classes in the weeks prior to their visit.
- During the second term (January to March 2022) and third term (April to June 2022), the schools focused on delivering the following theoretical lessons during classes, as per lesson plans provided by the I'mPOSSIBLE Educators:
 - *The Values in our school*
 - *Proud to be me*
 - *Let's create a Para Sport*
- The participating schools also carried out practical Para sport PE Lessons, covering both Para Volley (sitting volleyball) and VI Athletics (athletics for the visually impaired), using adapted Para sport equipment donated by the MPC and kindly sponsored by the Malta Youth Athletes Network. Furthermore, later on in the year students, engaged in Para boccia and Goalball.
- San Andrea School (Mgarr) and St. Monica School, Gzira also integrated Para Sport into their open days and sports days, enabling the participating primary and secondary school students to engage with Para sport values and ideas, and expressing these in a whole variety of activities, fun games, arts and crafts.
- The **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** was celebrated on 2nd December, with a series of I'mPOSSIBLE educational & Para sport activities at St Monica School Gzira and St Monica School Birkirkara. Students even in Paralympic sports (boccia and goalball) and other games for visually impaired athletes using blindfolds and equipment - a fun way of stepping into others' shoes and learning about disability in practice. Two of Malta's very own Paralympians Thomas Borg (Tokyo 2020, Para athletics, T47) and Antonio Flores (Beijing 2008, T64) joined in the fun and shared their experiences - changing how our upcoming generation perceives disability and sports.
- Finally, MPC engaged with the wider public through a **social media awareness campaign** about the I'mPOSSIBLE Programme. The campaign focused on the key objectives of

I'mPOSSIBLE, and the activities undertaken at the participating schools aimed at achieving these objectives. Moreover, the MPC launched a 4-part **mini-documentary** about its implementation of the I'mPOSSIBLE Programme. The mini documentaries have been uploaded to the official **YouTube Channel of the Paralympic Games** and are accessible on:

- Introducing I'mPOSSIBLE in Malta: the mini documentary ([link](#))
- I'mPOSSIBLE through the eyes of Maltese students ([link](#))
- Driving change in Malta with I'mPOSSIBLE ([link](#))
- I'mPOSSIBLE transforms teachers' views on Para Sport ([link](#))

Based on feedback from the participating schools, it was evident that all participating students benefitted profoundly from what they learnt through the I'mPOSSIBLE programme, with staff observing a change in attitude in the students towards Para sport and students with physical disabilities. This is a significantly positive sign and demonstrates that the programme is having its intended effects.

In this context, MPC express its profound gratitude to its I'mPOSSIBLE Educators, together with all the teachers and PE teachers at the participating schools, all of whom have been as eager and keen as the students to learn about Para sport and how we can all **#learn, #engage** and **#include** all in everything we do.





 I'm**POSSIBLE**

**LEARN.
ENGAGE.
INCLUDE.**

 I'm**POSSIBLE**

**LEARN.
ENGAGE.
INCLUDE.**



Photo credits: Malta Paralympic Committee

Going forward, the MPC intends to continue with realising its strategic goal of rolling out the I'mPOSSIBLE Education Programme in further primary and secondary schools across Malta and Gozo.

Whereas to date private and Church schools have participated in the programme, the MPC is hopeful that the programme will be extended to government schools in future scholastic years. In addition, the programme is designed to provide the participating schools with the necessary resources and level of support required to sustain the programme over multiple scholastic years, thus supporting its longer-term sustainability and continuity.

2.2 University of Malta, Institute for Physical Education & Sport Foundations in Coaching

For the 4th consecutive year running, members of the Executive Committee and Para sport coaches were entrusted with delivering a module dedicated to Para sport to students studying for the Foundations of Coaching course at the **Institute for Physical Education & Sport, University of Malta**.



The sessions were split over two sessions, covering both theoretical and practical aspects of Para sport, including:

- An introduction to Para sport and adapted sports
- Introduction to classification in Para sport - understanding the fundamentals
- Using adapted equipment in Para sport
- Coaching Para athletes
- Para sport in Malta - opportunities and challenges

The MPC is desirous of integrating Para sport and Para sport coaching into our national sport and educational curriculum. MPC calls upon our educational institutions and stakeholders to engage in a concerted effort to address the gaps in Para sport specific knowledge and expertise: we will only be able to create a more aptly equipped workforce and professionals through such dedicated education.

2.3 National School of Sport (NSS)

In April 2022, the **National School of Sport (NSS)** announced that it has revised its entry requirements policy to ensure that athletes falling within the ambit of Malta Paralympic Committee and Special Olympics Malta respectively will be eligible to apply to enrol with the school.



The MPC commends this important and ground-breaking initiative, the objective of which is two-fold. On the one hand, the initiative seeks to support inclusivity by ensuring that the sport entry criteria are, where appropriate, adapted to Para athletes' requirements. On the other hand, the collaboration is also geared towards affording an equal opportunity to aspiring competitive Para athletes to pursue their educational and sporting programmes within a holistic sporting and educational environment. NSS and MPC will be working together on formulating the necessary adaptations to the entry requirements, to ensure fairness, and transparency in the process. Interested applicants are encouraged to contact the Malta Paralympic Committee and the National School of Sport to be guided on the application process.

In addition, the MPC and NSS collaborated on several projects undertaken in 2022, with NSS hosting the VI Futsal Development Seminar held between 24-26th June 2022, as well as the VI Para Sport Introductory Seminar and Open Day held on 12th September 2022. The MPC expresses its gratitude for the support shown by NSS in supporting these projects through the provision of the necessary facilities, including lecture halls and sports halls required to deliver the combination of theoretical/information sessions and practical sports sessions relating to these projects. This support demonstrates the NSS' commitments towards promoting inclusion of Para sport as part of the wider sports offering in Malta.



Photo credits: National Sports School, Malta

2.4 MOU signed with Mediterranean College of Sport and Learning Works

In May 2022, the Malta Paralympic Committee signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the **Mediterranean College of Sport** and **Learning Works**. The MOU is aimed at aligning cooperation and collaboration in the areas of sport development, sports science, and educational excellence. Both entities will endeavour to support the enrolment of Para athletes at the Mediterranean College of Sport at both secondary and sixth form levels to enhance the inclusivity of Para athletes who wish to enrol with the College through the establishment of a target minimum annual Para athlete enrolment.



Photo credits: Mediterranean College of Sport / Learning Works

The three entities are committing to empowering Para athletes to achieve academic and sport excellence by enrolling with the Mediterranean College of Sport, supporting, and enhancing the long-term development and competitiveness of Para athletes, promoting the integration of Para athletes with able-bodied athletes and teams, developing local experience and expertise in the field of coaching Para athletes and promoting the Mediterranean College of Sport as an educational centre for academic and sporting excellence in sport and Para sport.

As part of this collaboration, Learning Works and the Mediterranean College of Sport have sponsored the participation of one of the coaches of Para Athletes, Edward Caruana Dingli, in the Master's in International Sport Coaching, which Learning Works is currently running with Liverpool John Moores University, ranked as one of the top ten universities in the world for sport related subjects.

The Mediterranean College of Sport will be a co-educational independent school, located in Birkirkara, that values the importance of sport within the learning process of student-athletes. Opening its doors in 2024 the College will include access to various sports facilities such as a Sport Science and Research Centre, a 25-metre six lane pool, a sport pavilion, two football pitches, on-site accommodation facilities, an athletics track, and a fitness and gymnastics centre.

2.5 Commonwealth Games Education and Legacy Programme - Developing tomorrow's sports leaders

In March 2022, MPC participated in a seminar addressed to secondary school students entitled *Developing tomorrow's sports leaders*. The seminar formed part of a series of educational and development sessions as part of the legacy programme of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.



The sessions were delivered alongside some of Malta's elite athletes who were appointed as Ambassadors for the Commonwealth Games, including ultra-triathlete Fabio Spiteri and ultra-distance swimmer Neil Agius.

The MPC's session focused on providing students with an overview of Para sport in Malta and the skills and know-how needed to develop a fully inclusive sporting environment. By way of example, students were invited to critically discuss and think about the potential obstacles to inclusion of Para athletes within a sports club or organisation, and how these challenges may be overcome through creative thinking and an open-minded approach.

2.6 Paralympic Sport Day organised by Marsascala Youths & Agenzija Zghazagh

On 20 July 2022, a **Paralympic Sports Day** was hosted at the Ta' Qali Basketball Pavilion as part of a summer programme offered by Youths Marsascala. The event was organised by **Youths Marsascala**, in collaboration with MPC and **Agenzija Zghazagh** (the National Youths Agency) and included a diverse range of Para sport activities, including Para Volley, Wheelchair Basketball, Blind Obstacle Course games, as well as a fun Para Sport trivia game. The event, which was over 100 youths take part, was aimed at introducing participants to different Para sports and experience first-hand the obstacles and challenges faced by Para athletes when practicing their sport and, most importantly, how to live up to the Paralympic values to overcome them. The youths engaged in various sports and fun activities and got the opportunity to learn from activists in Para sport who shared stories and experiences from their own journey in Para sport.

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Photo credits: Youths Marsascula

2.7 University Students Wheelchair Basketball Tournament

Students reading for a **BSc in Sport and Physical Activity** at the Institute for Physical Education and Sport, University of Malta, organised a wheelchair basketball tournament in collaboration with Malta Paralympic Committee and the **Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association**. The tournament brought together around 50 students across multiple faculties of the University of Malta, who engaged in a friendly tournament of 3x3 wheelchair basketball at the basketball court at Ta' Qali. The tournament was preceded by a presentation on Para sport, aimed at raising awareness amongst participants on inclusivity within sport and how, as future professionals in sport and education, they have a duty to ensure that Para sport is developed further as an integral part of sports and physical education in Malta and Gozo. The organising committee was led by Thomas Borg, a competitive T47 Para athletics sprinter and one of Malta's Paralympians who competed at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.





Photo credits: Thomas Borg, PLY

2.8 Olympic Day organised by Maltese Paralympic Committee

Para sport was represented during the Olympic Day activities organised by the Maltese Olympic Committee on 19 June 2022. The public was invited to give wheelchair basketball a try - an opportunity to step into the shoes of wheelchair basketball players and enjoy the game in a friendly and festive environment. The inclusion of Para sport on the programme of the Olympic Day activities is testament to the growing understanding and recognition of Para sport as an integral part of Malta's sporting community.

2.9 SportMalta #BeActive European Week of Sport 2022 Ambassadors

Paralympian Thomas Borg was among the **SportMalta #BeActive European Week of Sport 2022 Ambassadors**, alongside a cohort formed of SportMalta plantroom employee Ronnie Spiteri, world junior weightlifting champion Tenisha Thornton, judoka and Commonwealth bronze medallist Katryna Esposito and Sam Micallef from Special Olympics Malta.



Photo credits: SportMalta

Launched by SportMalta on 13 September 2022 by SportMalta Chief Executive Officer **Mr. Mark Cutajar** and National Coordinator **Rose Marie Mercieca**, the European Week of Sport is grounded in promoting sport and physical activity as a driving force for the well-being of European citizens. Cognisant that the level of physical activity in Malta remains below European targets, the flagship events of the European Week of Sport comprised the **#BeActive Night** on 24 September 2022 focusing on physical fitness and inclusivity, together with the main national event held at the Marsa Sports Grounds on 25 September 2022, where sports associations, clubs and other entities were invited to organise sporting events within a publicly accessible sports village.

2.10 Bulletproof Culture Awards 2022 Finalists

Three Maltese Para athletes were among the finalists of the inaugural **Bulletproof Culture Awards 2022**. The awards celebrated Malta's top talent in sport and fitness. Nominees were selected shortlisted through a public nominations process and awarded through an adjudication process led by an esteemed panel of sports journalists and administrators.

All three finalists finished as runner-sup, with **JeanFred Agius** (Para calisthenics) awarded in the **Most Improved** category, **Nick Mercieca** (Para karate and Para rowing) in **Most Inspiring** category and **Maja Theuma** (Para swimming) in the **Most Bulletproof** category.



Photo credits: Bulletproof Culture

2.12 Sports Awards 2022 Semi-Finalists and Finalists

Maltese Para sport was recognised on the national stage at the 62nd Edition of the *Ghazliet Sportivi Nazzjonali 2022*, organised by SportMalta and the Malta Sports Journalist Association, being shortlisted in no less than seven semi-final categories:

- **Male Athlete of the Year** Thomas Borg, Paralympian - Para athletics
- **Female Athlete of the Year** Vladyslava Kravchenko, Paralympian - Para swimming
- **Youth Male Athlete of the Year** Nick Mercieca, Para athlete - Para rowing & karate
- **Coach of the Year** Kevin Galea - Para athletics
- **Team of the Year** Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association

- **Official of the Year**
- **People’s Choice Award**

Julian Bajada, Secretary General - MPC
 Maja Theuma - Para athlete, Para swimming
 Noel Aquilina - Para athlete, Wheelchair basketball

Four of our semi-finalists made it through to the final round, in the Male Athlete of the Year, Official of the Year and People’s Choice Award categories respectively.



SPORTMALTA AWARDS
 Għażliet Sportivi Nazzjonali
 62nd Edition

2.13 Premju Soċjetà Ġusta Award Winner 2022

Malta Paralympic Committee was awarded with the **Premju Soċjetà Ġusta 2022**. The Premju Soċjetà Ġusta celebrates and recognises the work, commitment, and dedication of various entities and individuals in the disability sector. Presented by His Excellency President Dr George Vella at an award ceremony organised on 9th December 2022 and hosted by the Ministry for Inclusion and Voluntary Organisations the award was granted in recognition of the Committee’s work to promote and develop Para sport in Malta and Gozo. Celebrating the eight winners awarded during the ceremony, President George Vella highlighted that: *“Every young or old person, with a visible or hidden disability, has the right to a dignified and most independent life possible”,* appealing to all *“to keep this in mind and heart whenever they interact with people with disabilities.”*



Photo credits: Department of Information (DOI), Government of Malta

3. PARA SPORT DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Para sport Development - general overview

In 2022, the MPC undertook an evaluation of the state of development of Para sport in Malta, with the objective of identifying the key strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

The high-level statistics drawn from the evaluation are set out hereunder, using July 2018 as the base year for comparison. The empirical evidence collated and evaluated, and the high-level statistics presented hereunder is based on the MPC's direct awareness of and contact with the Para athletes concerned, their coaches and/or their parents or legal guardians (as the case may be). The MPC cautions that the data may, therefore, exclude other Para athletes (with an eligible impairment) who are active in Para sport and who may, as of 30 November 2022, may be unknown to the MPC.

Table 1: Number of active Para Athletes and types of Para sports

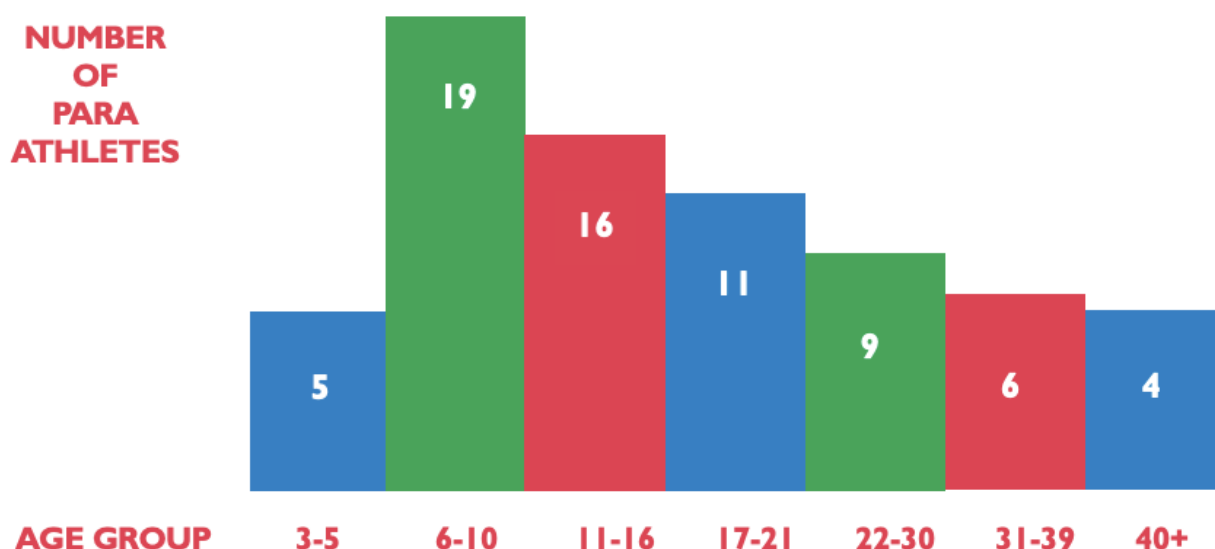


Table 2: Development Level and Gender Ratio

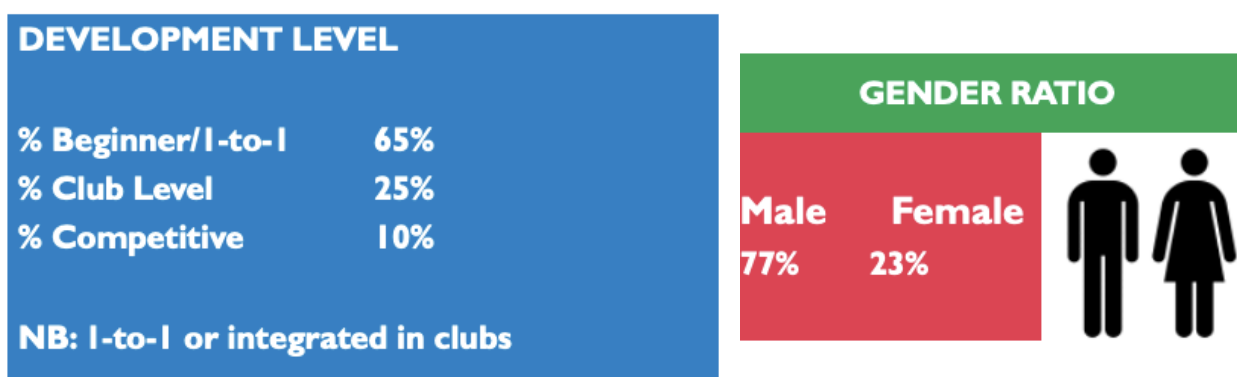
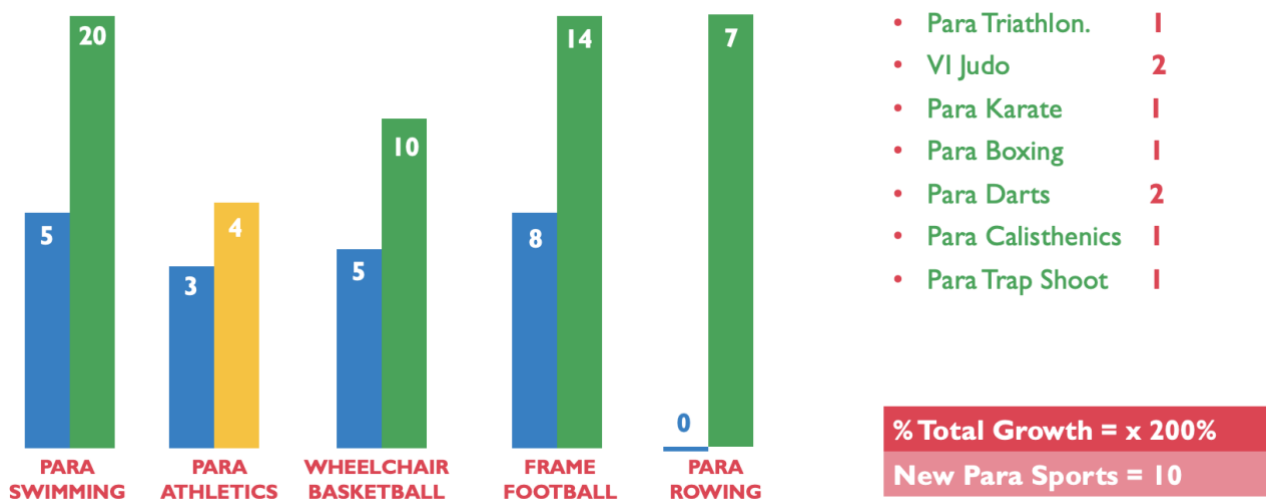


Table 3: Growth of core Para sports



The Para sports listed in green on the right side represent 'new' Para sport disciplines (i.e., sports in which Para athletes are active in, in comparison with having no Para athletes in such sports in 2018).
Disclaimer – information based on MPC survey carried out in 2022 and actual figures may vary.

Overall, there has been a 200%+ growth in the number of active Para athletes between 2018-2022, jumping from *circa* **15** active Para athletes in 2018 to *circa* **60** in 2022. In addition, it is noteworthy that the number of Para athletes within the youth categories has increased steadily, enhancing the possibility of widening the net of prospective competitive Para athletes within the next 3-5 years.

In this youth category, the vast majority of Para athletes train on a *one-to-one* basis, with the focus being on a personalised training programme aimed at equipping these athletes with the basic skills in their sport discipline. The number of competitive Para athletes remains limited (less than 10).

Maltese Para athletes represent a range of eligible impairments and may broadly be split into three categories:

Wheelchair users - physical impairments

- Spinal cord injuries
- Spina Bifida

Non-wheelchair users - physical impairments

- Amputees (congenital/acquired)
- Cerebral palsy (including athletes who use walking aids)
- Ataxia or Hypertonia
- Paraplegia
- Impaired active/passive range of motion
- Impaired muscle power

Visual impairments

- Blind / Visually impaired

4.2 Para sport Development - Para sport specific

Highlights

In 2022, Maltese Para athletes competed across multiple Para sport disciplines, including the national and international competitions listed hereunder:



Para swimming

- ASA Time Trials 2022
- ASA Easter National Championships 2022
- ASA Summer National Championships 2022
- World Para Swimming World Series Lignano 2022



Para athletics

- Athletics Malta Time Trials 2022
- World Para Athletics European Gran Prix Paris 2022



Para rowing

- World Rowing Development Training Camp Gavirate 2022
- National Indoor Rowing Time Trials May 2022
- National Indoor Rowing Championships November 2022
- Establishment of Concept2 World Records



Wheelchair basketball

- IWBF Europe EuroCup Qualifiers Lille 2022



Para darts

- World Para Darts Winmau World Trophy Belgium 2022
- World Para Darts European Open Championships Assen 2022
- Malta International Para Darts Open 2022



Para shooting

- Para Trap Shooting Open Beretta Gren Cup Todi 2022
- Para Trap European Championships 2022

Deep dive into Para sport development and competitions in 2022

In the subsequent sections below, we take a deep dive into the development activities and progress made across each Para sport discipline in 2022.

4.2.1 Para Swimming

World Para Swimming World Series 2022 and Training Camp, Lignano Sabbiadoro

Para Swimmer **Maja Theuma**, accompanied by Exiles SC coach **Edward Caruana Dingli**, represented Malta at the **World Para Swimming World Series** held in **Lignano Sabbiadoro**, Italy, held between 10 to 15 March 2022. The competition was followed by a training camp organised by Exiles SC for its competitive swimming squad, in which Maja Theuma participated alongside able-bodied swimmers.

Maja Theuma participated in a total of three events in the para swimming S5 class female category: **100m Backstroke (03:10.94)**, **50m Freestyle (01:08.42)**, and **400m Freestyle (10:02.26)**. Maja achieved very positive results at this meet and although no personal best times were swum, her results were all close to her personal best times, with two of her results being **seasonal best** results and one being the second fastest result she has obtained.

This trip served as the first international competition of the season for Maja Theuma and a chance to gain more exposure competing internationally at a meet which includes Para athletes of all levels. It also served as an opportunity to prepare for the national Aquatic Sports Association of Malta International Easter Meet 2022 and Summer Nationals 2022. The competition was followed by a short training camp at the Olympic Lignano Sabbiadoro Bella Italia complex where Maja underwent two days of intense training with the rest of the Exiles SC competitive swimming squad before returning home to continue her training commitments in Malta.



Photo credits: World Para Swimming

A second Para swimming training camp was held in September 2022, at the same Olympic-grade training facilities at Lignano Sabbiadoro. Maja Theuma benefitted from being assigned a coach on a one-to-one basis throughout the entire duration of the training camp, allowing for a personalised training regime. This personalisation allowed the athlete and coach time to closely evaluate technique and performance throughout the training camp. By the end of the camp, the coach and athlete were able to establish the key targets for the upcoming 2022-2023 season.

Grassroots Para swimming development

In addition, the youth and grassroots branches of Para swimming continued to be supported by several swimming clubs, coaches and instructors, including coach **Leah Satariano**, **Exiles SC** (coach **Tim Hartley** and **Edward Caruana Dingli**), **Finz Swimming Club** (coach **Nikki Muscat**), **SouthWaves Swimming Club** (coach **Ebi Ebinaid**) and **Neptunes Swimming Club** (coach **Gail Rizzo**).

These clubs and coaches have supported upcoming Para swimmers in the youth category (from as young as 4 years to 15 years of age), ranging across a spectrum of physical and visual impairment classes. The majority of Para swimmers within the youth category trained on a personalised one-to-one basis, with swimmers broadly split between 'learning to swim' phase and 'fundamentals swimming' phase, focusing on basic technique, stroke work and building up confidence in the water.

Over the course of the year, MPC had touchpoint meetings with the coaches and clubs involved, with the aim of seeking feedback on the progress of the individual Para swimmers concerned. In addition, the MPC and coaches concerned developed a mutual understanding and target of gradually moving the upcoming youth Para swimmers from one-to-one training sessions to a team training environment, alongside other Para swimmers and able-bodied swimmers.

Ultimately, Para swimming remains one of the most widely practised Para sport in Malta and the MPC aims to continue supporting this trend, considering the suitability of the sport to different impairment types.

4.2.2 Para Athletics

Malta's very own and only blade runner, **Zurrieq Wolves Athletic Club** athlete **Antonio Flores PLY**, coached by **Kevin Galea**, represented Malta at the World Para Athletics Gran Prix held in Paris, France, between 9 - 10 June 2022. Antonio Flores competed in the **T64** men's class (below the knee single-leg amputees), registering a seasonal best in the 100m T64 event, with a time of **13.54s**.

The World Para Athletics Paris Gran Prix was the fourth stop of the 2022 World Para Athletics Grand Prix season and will be the host city of next year's World Para Athletics World Championships and the 2024 Paralympic Games. The Paris Gran Prix, saw no less than 700 Para athletes from 57 countries competing at the Charlety Stadium, the same venue that will host the 2023 Worlds.

Antonio is no newcomer to international Para Athletics, being Malta's first Paralympian since the 1980s and having competed at the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games. Active in athletics since 2004, Antonio underwent a lower body amputation in 2017 and his commitment and passion towards the sport has only grown stronger.

Antonio’s participation in the Paris Gran Prix marked a remarkable comeback to the international competitive scene following a season-ending injury suffered back in April 2021 that resulted in a rupture to his achilles and an unfortunate end to Antonio’s hopes of competing at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games - after having been awarded a wild card invitation to compete at the Games and having come within fractions of attaining a minimum qualifying standard time in the months ahead of the Games.

Following medical interventions and months of intensive rehabilitation, Antonio pulled through with resilience and perseverance, with his mind steadfast on returning to the track and working towards his next goals, showing unbounded commitment towards Para Athletics. The Malta Paralympic Committee wishes to extend its congratulations to Antonio for this feat, noting that this comeback to competitive Para Athletics demonstrates the holistic and professional preparation that Para Athletes undergo, encompassing both physical and mental preparation and is a model example for other athletes.

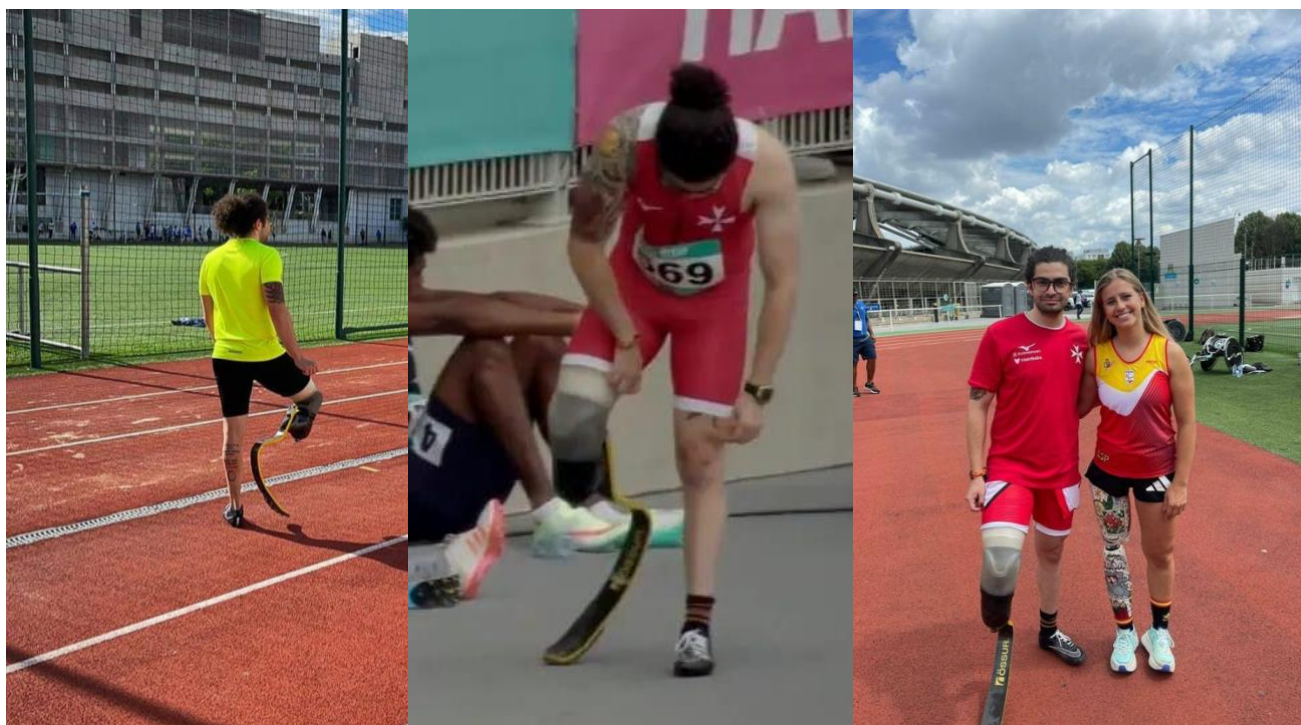


Photo credits: Antonio Flores, PLY

4.2.3 Wheelchair Basketball

EuroCup 2023 Qualifier – first international experience for Maltese wheelchair basketball

The **Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association (MWBA)** was represented at the **International Wheelchair Basketball Federation Europe EuroCup 2023 Qualifier** held in Lille, France between 22 to 23 April 2022, by a national team contingent made of up five wheelchair basketball players (**Noel Aquilina, Matthew Enriquez, Bradley Zerafa, John Xuereb, and Ronald Galea**), led by national team coach **Isaac Xuereb** and assistant coach **Nathan Xuereb**.



Photo credits: Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association

The MWBA team competed in a total of four games:

Friday 22 April	MWBA vs Elan Chalon Basket-Fauteil	13-75
Friday 22 April	MWBA vs Hubo Limburg United on Wheels	24-65
Saturday 23 April	MWBA vs Wheel Foxes	44-77
Saturday 23 April	MWBA vs LUC Lille Handibasket	37-65

The team's participation in this qualification tournament is considered to be a significant milestone in the team's development and an important test of its technical and sporting capacity - with this being the Malta Wheelchair Basketball's first time competing on the international scene in an official IWBF Europe tournament. The qualification round was considered fundamental to the development of wheelchair basketball as, being the sole wheelchair basketball team in Malta, competing against foreign wheelchair basketball teams is necessary to improve the quality and level of Maltese wheelchair basketball players.

For Malta's wheelchair basketball contingent, this was also their very first experience of competing against club and regional level wheelchair basketball teams, which served as a useful competitive orientation experience. One of MWBA's players - **Matthew Enriquez** - was awarded an **MVP** award by IWBF Europe, ranking in the top 5 players of the tournament, in recognition of Matthew's sporting performance and technical ability shown during the tournament. This augurs well for Matthew's development.



Photo credits: IWBF Europe



Photo credits: Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association

Overall, the team’s participation has enabled the contingent to assess their relative strengths and areas for improvement. Following the competition, an evaluation meeting was held between Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association and Malta Paralympic Committee, including head coach Isaac Xuereb, at which a post-competition analysis was undertaken, with a view to formulating a plan of action for the upcoming 2022/2023 wheelchair basketball season. The two entities agreed to collaborate further to strengthen the wheelchair basketball team, including through a greater focus on a holistic training programme that combines individual skills development, ball play and team, together with strength and conditioning.

Wheelchair basketball in the community

In 2022 and following the easing of the Covid-19 related restrictions, wheelchair basketball was active in the community – engaging with the public and collaborating with various private and public sector organisations to bring wheelchair basketball closer to our communities.



Photo credits: Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association

4.2.4 Para Rowing

World Rowing Para Rowing Development and Training Camp – Gavirate, Italy

Malta was represented on the international Para rowing stage at the **International Para Rowing development training camp** held in Gavirate Italy and organised by **World Rowing**, in collaboration with the **Italian Paralympic Committee** and the **Gavirate Rowing Club (A.S.D. Canottieri Gavirate)**, home to former and present Paralympic and Olympic rowers. Held between 9 - 13 May 2022, the development training camp was attended by para rowers **Nick Mercieca** and **Julian Bajada**, accompanied by **Prof. Joseph Grima** (President - Malta Paralympic Committee; President - Siggiewi Rowing Club).

The team participated in a week-long development training camp that combined:

- guided training sessions on the ergometer and indoor rowing tank
- guided training sessions on the Paralympic Rowing single scull adaptive rowing boats
- coach technical development sessions
- boat rigging technical development sessions

The team was assisted primarily by coaches from national level coaches from Italy, Hong Kong, Australia, Canada and Tunisia (among others) having experience with Olympic and Paralympic level coaches. Specifically, the team was coached by two Italian coaches with over 20 years' experience in coaching able-bodied rowers and Para rowers at elite level. Each training session was followed by a debriefing session with the participating Para athletes, together with a separate coaches only debriefing session. The debriefs focused on key lessons learnt during the training sessions, with a view to drawing on key strengths and areas for improvement and fostering an open channel of communication between Para athletes and coaches.



From the Para athletes' individual perspective, this training camp served as a unique opportunity for Maltese para rowers to try and test Paralympic Rowing using adapted para rowing boats - a first for Malta. Over the course of the training camp, the athletes were able to learn the basic concepts of using adapted rowing boats, with particular attention paid to boat control, boat stability, direction, and technique with the rowing oars. The Para athletes were able to learn invaluable knowledge from elite level coaches with vast experience, and a notable improvement in the athletes' self-awareness and technique was noted by the end of the training camp. The training camp also allowed our athletes to train and work alongside international para rowers of varying levels, from beginner level to competitive level - thus gaining first-hand insights from other Para athletes.

In addition, the camp provided Nick Mercieca and Julian Bajada the opportunity to obtain international **classification** in Para rowing (undergoing medical and sports tests undertaken by the World Rowing official international classifiers in accordance with the international rules and regulations on classification).

Obtaining international classification is mandatory for participation in international para rowing competitions. Through this process, Nick and Julian became Malta's **first** ever internationally classified Para rowers.



Photo credits: World Rowing

Concept2 World Records established at the 2022 Malta National Indoor Rowing Championships

Para rowers **Kurt Farrugia** and **Nick Mercieca** established new World Records in Indoor Rowing for the 500m in their respective Para rowing classes and age categories. This result was achieved by Farrugia and Mercieca, representing Siggiewi Rowing Club, during the 2022 edition of the Malta National Indoor Rowing Championships, organised by Malta Rowing Association (Għaqda Regatta Nazzjonali u Qdif leħor) with the support of SportMalta, held on 19 November 2022.

Kurt Farrugia competed in the adaptive category **Men 19-29 PR2** and finished his **500m in 2 minutes 5.4seconds** – 0.7 seconds than the previous world record holder; whilst **Nick Mercieca** competed in the adaptive category **Men 15-16 PR1**, finishing the 500m in **3 minutes 9.6 seconds**, the first ever world record recorded for this race. This is the first time that World Records were set in Malta during the National Indoor Rowing Championships by either an abled body athlete or a Para athlete.



Photo credits: Malta Rowing Association (Għaqda Regatta Nazzjonali u Qdif Ieħor)

Prof. Joseph N. Grima, President of the Malta Paralympic Committee and Siggiewi Rowing Club, whilst congratulating Kurt Farrugia and Nick Mercieca for their stellar performances and their newly acquired world records, noted the positive developments that are occurring in local rowing scene which is seeing the co-development of Olympic and Paralympic rowing. *"What we are witnessing here is the result of hard work, courage and determination of the athletes, who with the support of their coach Juan Farrugia, their Club, National Association and their respective families, were able to show the world the strength that lies within them. What we are seeing here goes much beyond inclusion: this is proof that excellence in sports and beyond can be achieved if one truly wants it."*

Collaboration on Para rowing development with Siggiewi Rowing Club

In 2022, MPC paired up with **Siggiewi Rowing Club (SRC)** to co-develop Para rowing. SRC is at the forefront of the development of para rowing in Malta, being the first Maltese rowing club to have Para athletes within its ranks and embeds Para rowing as a core pillar of its growth strategy.

Siggiewi Rowing Club is an all-inclusive sports club, established in 2016 with the aim of bringing together individuals of all ages and abilities, and professionally guide them in their personal journey in the sport of rowing and its various disciplines. The Club is a full member of Malta Rowing Association and is one of the eight rowing clubs that participate in the Maltese National Regattas held on the 31 st March and 8th September. Various club athletes also train and compete in various international events and regattas.

Malta Paralympic Committee expresses satisfaction at how Para rowing is progressing into becoming one of the fastest growing and widely practised Para sports in Malta, bringing together Para athletes with a diverse mix of impairments, including visually impaired Para athletes in more recent months. Malta Paralympic Committee calls on other sports clubs to learn from the best practice example being set by Siggiewi Rowing Club, a club that is putting innovation in Para sport at the forefront of its sporting philosophy and ensuring full participation by Para athletes within the sport.

4.2.5 Frame Football - Erasmus DETERMINED Project and Training Sessions

Malta Paralympic Committee was invited to participate in the **Erasmus DETERMINED** project organised and implemented by **Frame Football Malta (FFM)**. The project brought together players from **Frame Football Malta, Santa Venera Lightings FC** and **EDU scuola calcio per tutti**, with a total of 44 participants comprising of able-bodied and Para athlete frame footballers.



Photo credits: Frame Football Malta

The overriding theme of the project was inclusion through sports, underpinned in the reasoning that team sports such as frame football enables the sharing of ideas and experiences to achieve a higher common goal. The programme consisted of a series of sports, games, educational and cultural activities, with participants empowered to develop the fundamental social skills of acceptance, tolerance, respect and responsibility, whilst also building self-confidence and self-esteem by engaging with able-bodied peers and peers having a disability. MPC joined the discussion session

on *Making Sport more Accessible- The experience of a Paralympic Athlete*, with Para athlete Maja Theuma sharing her experience with the group, together with MPC President Prof. Joseph Grima.

In addition, 2022 marked a positive year for Frame Football Malta as it resumed its normal schedule of weekly frame football training sessions, following the mini-hiatus during the Covid-19 restrictive period. Sessions were on Wednesdays at the SportMalta Kirkop Sports Complex, together with ad-hoc training sessions at other indoor and outdoor training facilities throughout the year. Sessions were even introduced in Gozo. Frame Football Malta boasts a group of *circa* 12-15 Para athletes, ranging from 7 to 18 years of age. FFM is led by President Rita Darmanin Carbonaro.



Photo credits: Frame Football Malta

4.2.6 Para Shooting

2022 also marked a first for Para Shooting, with MPC and the **Malta Shooting Sport Federation** establishing relations for the first time. Through the collaborative working relationship developed, Malta Para Trap Shooter **Anglu Ciapparra** represented Malta in a number of national and international competitions. Most notably, Anglu Ciapparra placed first in the PT2 Para Trap open class at the **Italian Open Beretta Green Cup** held at the Umbriaverde Resort in Todi, Italy in July 2022. Malta's first Para Trap shooter bagged a score of 108/125, topping the podium in the **PT2 class**, beating the Italians who finished second and third place respectively.

In addition, Anglu Ciapparra competed in the first ever **Para Trap European Championship** that took place at Trap Concaverde Shooting Range in Lonato del Garda, Italy. This event saw a total of 45 Para athletes from 17 European nations in three different categories. Ciapparra competed in the **PT2 Event Class SG-L**. Para athletes in this class have an impairment in the lower limb(s), but no functional limitation in the upper limbs. On day 1 of the competition, the Maltese Para Shooter was in a very good position, when he was ranking 2nd overall with the score of 67/75. The result of day 2 was below his average with just 39/50 hit targets. Ciapparra finished his competition with the score of 106/125, just 1 target away from a potential shoot-off for the final stages.



Photo credits: World Para Shooting

4.2.7 Para Sailing

The **Malta Sailing Federation** embarked on its Para Sailing development programme, following the handing over of three Hansa 303 class Paralympic sailing boats by Yachting Malta to the Malta Sailing Federation on 16th June 2022.

The choice of boats was made by Yachting Malta following consultations with the Malta Sailing Federation, World Sailing and the Sicilian Lega Navale. These boats will now be housed within Clubs affiliated with the Malta Sailing Federation and will herald in a new era of adaptive sailing in Malta. The launch event was attended by Gianluca Aquilina, Malta's first sailor to compete in a Para Sailing Event, Club Commodores David Dalli (Birzebbugia Sailing Club), Christian Bajada (Malta Young Sailors Club, David Cremona (Royal Malta Yacht Club) and Sandra Agius Darmanin (Vikings Sailing Club), as well as several supporters of the Para Sailing Project.



Photo credits: Malta Sailing Federation

4.2.8 Para Darts

Para Darts athlete **Joseph Martin** represented Malta at the **World Para Darts Winmau World Trophy** held in Ostend, Belgium in May 2022. The World Trophy proved to be a great experience for Joseph Martin, reaching the knock-out stages of the tournament in which 89 Para athletes from fourteen countries competed. Joseph Martin played in the singles Para Darts standing class, finishing in top spot in the group stages, beating American Brenden Conway and Dutchman Dennis Hillebrand, before being knocked out in the last 32 stage, being eliminated by Belgian Tony Schoolmeesters. Joseph Martin also competed in the mixed teams category together with Para athletes Rob Gillan, Patrick Morrison and Jackie Goethals, beating Hungary 9-5, before losing out 4-9 to Denmark.

Joseph Martin went on to represent Malta at the **World Para Darts World Masters 2022** competition held in Assen, Netherlands between Thursday 8 - Monday 12 December 2022, accompanied by coach **Martyn. K Burrows**. Joseph Martin competed in the masters Para darts men's singles standing category, successfully passing through the group stages and qualifying for the last 16 round, finishing 9th place overall - out of a total of 28 competing Para athletes. This result is Joseph's best-ever result (personal best) attained at an international competition sanctioned by World Para Darts, becoming the first ever Maltese Para darts players to attain this result.

Joseph Martin qualified for this competition via his points accumulated during the Malta Premier League of Darts 2021/2022 season and his rankings achieved during the **Malta Darts International Open and Para Darts International Open** competition held between 8 - 10 November 2022.

In November 2022, Para dart players **Joseph Martin** and **Bradley Zerafa** competed at the Malta International Darts and Para Darts Open, in their respective youths and master categories. The Malta International Para Darts Open was hosted at the SportMalta Kirkop Sports Complex and was organised by the Malta Darts Association.



The event is an official competition sanctioned by World Para Darts, with a good number of foreign high-level Para dart players competing at this event.



Photo credits: Malta Darts Association

4.2.9 Para Boxing (VI)

Para boxer **Samuel Hugh Grech**, aged 23, participated in his first ever international Para boxing training camp between Wednesday 29 June to Monday 25 July 2022. Hugh is a visually impaired Para athlete (*microphthalmia in the right eye (no vision) and dyspraxic*) and has been training in Para boxing for circa 2 years.

The international training camp consisted of a month-long training camp, with up to two training sessions per day. The training sessions focused on a combination of technique, power and endurance work. Most importantly, Hugh benefitted from personalised one-to-one training sessions, allowing the coach and athlete to evaluate individual performance and track progress over the course of the training camp.

Hugh trained under the guidance of coach **Matthew Etherington** at **Brighton & Hove Boxing Club**, Brighton. The coach is one of the only coaches in the UK specialising in adapted Para boxing, including boxing for visually impaired athletes. Coach Etherington has been involved in designing a coaching module and manual for adapted Para boxing together with Boxing England and Sport England, as well as classification in Para boxing. This unique specialist expertise and experience allowed Hugh to learn new techniques and adaptations that are necessary for visually impaired athletes, including safety protocols that are fundamental to Para boxing. Hugh benefitted from his participation with a professional and inclusive environment, training on a personalised one-to-one basis, as well as within small groups of 8 to 10 athletes. By the end of the training camp, Hugh enhanced his competitive skills in Para boxing, opening the possibility to competing at future events.

4.2.10 Para Volley

ParaVolley Malta General Secretary, Antonello Calleja, was appointed as General Manager at **ParaVolley Europe**, the regional confederation which oversees all ParaVolley activities in Europe – covering all volleyball disciplines for persons with disabilities, with the main disciplines being Sitting Volleyball, Beach ParaVolley and Sitting Beach Volley. Antonello has been involved in the same confederation as Chair of the Beach Commission, as well as Technical Manager, and has played a fundamental part in the organisation of Sitting Volleyball and Beach ParaVolley competitions throughout Europe during 2021 and 2022.



The appointment of a General Manager within ParaVolley Europe was a pressing need due to the increase in competitions within the same organisation, and also due to the increase in the interest shown by various European nations to include Sitting Volleyball and Beach ParaVolley as part of their volleyball activities. Antonello Calleja has been involved in Volleyball and Sitting Volleyball since 1992, starting as a player during one of the Volleyball Marathons organised to collect funds for the *Dar tal-Providenza*, and then occupying various other posts in the coaching and administrative spheres with local clubs and within the Malta Volleyball Association. He was also an International Volleyball Referee for 16 years, whilst between 2011 and 2021, Calleja was also an International ParaVolley Referee.

4.3 ISPORT Project - Para sport for visually impaired athletes

Collaboration between Malta Paralympic Committee and The Malta Trust Foundation

The **ISPORT Project** is a collaboration between the Malta Paralympic Committee (MPC) and The Malta Trust Foundation (TMTF) aimed at developing Para sport for blind and visually impaired children and young people in Malta, known internationally as **Blind sport** or **VI** ('visually impaired') **Para sport**.



About the ISPORT Project

The ISPORT Project seeks to enable blind and visually empowered athletes to participate meaningfully in sport, with the aim of empowering such individuals from a physical, social and mental well-being perspective. The project will focus on three core pillars:

- ***Developing a core set of Blind Sport and VI Para Sport in Malta:*** the ISPORT project will develop a core set of blind sport and VI Para sport disciplines, which are expected to be blind Futsal, VI Para athletics, VI Para swimming, VI indoor rowing, and VI Judo. Blind and visually impaired athletes will be paired up with local sports clubs and coaches within an integrated sports club environment alongside able-bodied and sighted athletes. Participants in this project already include the Futsal Malta Association, Siggiewi Rowing Club, Exiles SC and swimming coach Leah Satariano.
- ***Empowering athletes with a visual and other impairment:*** the project aims to maximise the potential and different abilities of blind and visually impaired athletes by providing athletes, parents, sports entities, coaches and clubs with the necessary tools, resources and ongoing support to realise this goal. Support will be provided by way of assistance to the sports clubs and coaches involved (including the provision of the necessary specialist training and sports technical development to equip them with the necessary know-how in blind sport and VI Para sport), as well as through financial support to the participating sports entities and athletes. Participants will also benefit from a support and mentoring programme, with a view to steering them on their journey in sport.
- ***Educating, raising awareness and challenging perceptions:*** the project will also engage in educational and awareness activities, with the goal of challenging perceptions about disability through sport, creating a more inclusive society and breaking barriers faced by individuals with visual impairments in Malta.

ISPORT Open Day

The project was formally launched on 12th September 2022 during a press conference in which representatives of MPC and TMTF detailed the ambitions and objectives of this innovative project.

The launch was followed by an **Open Day** held at the **National School of Sport**, during which blind and visually impaired athletes were invited to try out various VI Para sports under one roof, with blind futsal, indoor rowing, athletics, and judo all on offer.

For many of these individuals, this was the very first time they ever participated in sport and physical activity, demonstrating the very gap in our society that the ISPORT Project seeks to address.



The Chairperson of The Malta Trust Foundation, **Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca** explained that *"this was the natural step ahead for The Malta Trust Foundation, in the context of the work that we do with children and young people with disability. Therefore, when we were approached by the Malta Paralympic Committee to collaborate, we immediately saw the benefits that could result from this project. We want ISPORT to be another opportunity for children and young people with disability to continue developing their full potential. They deserve it."*

Ecc. Marie-Louise added that this project gives life to Article 30 of the United Nations (2006) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, which states that its signatories "...recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life", remarking that it is up to us to ensure that this Convention is fully adhered to, by translating into long-lasting and impactful actions.

For the MPC the ISPORT Project marks a new phase for Para Sport development in Malta, noting that the project: *"embodies MPC's ethos of inclusion meets excellence. Ringing true to the MPC's mission statement of enabling individuals to fulfil their full potential through Para Sport, this project will also inspire and shape our communities by pushing boundaries by daring to do what many may think is impossible. The MPC believes that every individual deserves the best possible opportunity to experience and reap the life-long benefits of sport, asserting that this project is a step in this direction, for individuals from all walks of life, age and ambitions."*

During the Open Day, blind and visually impaired athletes, together with their relatives, were also given the opportunity to interact with and learn from established Para athletes and Para sport ambassadors present, including some of Malta's very own Paralympians.

The Open Day was also attended by various key sport and disability stakeholders, including the **Minister for Education and Sport** (Hon. Dr Clifton Grima), the **Minister for Inclusion and Voluntary Organisations** (Hon. Dr Julia Farrugia Portelli), the **Opposition Spokesperson for Sport** (Mr Graham Bencini), the **Opposition Spokesperson for the Disability Sector** (Hon. Graziella Galea), **Giovanni Ficarra** (rowing World Champion), **The Malta Society of the Blind**, **The Malta Guide Dogs Foundation**, **Advice**, **Agenzija Sapport** and **The Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, Ultra Triathlete **Fabio Spiteri**, Runner **Tommy Wallbank** and visually impaired runner **Jesper Mathiesen**, among others.



Photo credits: Gadgets



Photo credits: Gadgets

Blind Futsal Development Seminar organised by Futsal Malta Association

As part of the ISPORT Project, the **Futsal Malta Association (FMA)** launched the first phase of its VI Futsal Development Project. The project aims at developing futsal for the visually impaired (VI) - a watershed moment for FMA and was chosen as its hallmark project to celebrate 10 years since establishing FMA.

The announcement was made during a weekend seminar organised in collaboration with the **International Blind Sport Association (IBSA)** and Malta Paralympic Committee, which saw technical officials from IBSA's blind football development division deliver a holistic theoretical and practical programme to kickstart the development of VI Futsal in Malta. Various officials, administrators and coaches participated in the programme, which afforded them the opportunity to learn from the know-how and depth of experience of IBSA's international technical officials. Split over the course of two days, the programme includes practical sessions on how to adapt training sessions, pitch orientation, drills and game-play to suit blind athletes and visually impaired athletes, together with appropriate training on coaching within an inclusive environment that brings together able-bodied and visually impaired athletes on the same pitch.



Photo credits: Futsal Malta Association

The seminar is the first step in establishing the necessary organisational capacity to offer VI Futsal to athletes locally and the FMA intends to roll out FI Futsal training sessions in the coming weeks.

Futsal Malta Association President Perit Mark Borg underlined that *“This is a milestone project for our association representing our ethos and social responsibility. We are committed to continue reaching out to the community in order to fulfil our objectives.”* MPC commends Futsal Malta Association’s collaborative and proactive approach to the project, highlighting the association’s willingness to learn and explore the area in depth. MPC highlighted that this is a positive sign of shifting trends in national sports associations’ perception of Para Sport and encouraged other associations to follow FMA’s model example in this regard.



Photo credits: Futsal Malta Association, Joe Borg

The IBSA delegation was composed of **Elias Mastoras** and **Lauren Asquith**. Elias Mastoras is the current IBSA Blind Football Chairperson and a Rio 2016 Paralympic Games Referee Coordinator and World Referee Coordinator between 2013-2017. Elias was also a referee of the Gold Medal Match of Blind Football at the Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games. On her part, Lauren Asquith is the English Football Association (England FA) national coach for the England Blind Women Football team and is a Para Sport talent pathway and development coach, having been involved in the sector since 2013.

Initial Phase of the ISPORT Project

In the weeks following the ISPORT Project Open Day, *circa* blind and visually impaired individuals were guided by the MPC to enrol with sports clubs to commence training sessions. Where required, introductory and 1-to-1 training sessions were offered, to support a smooth transition into the sports clubs' environment in which blind and visually impaired athletes will be enabled to train alongside able-bodied and sighted athletes.

By the end of 2022, a total of **10** visually impaired individuals had commenced regular weekly training sessions, split across Para rowing and Para swimming.

MPC and TMTF encourage blind and visually impaired individuals, and their relatives, to take their first step in sport and come forward to participate in the ISPORT Project. Financial support relating to club registration fees, coaching and other related expenses is provided (up to certain limits) in order not to add additional expenses to the families of the children and young people participating. For further information, interested individuals may contact MPC via maltaparacom@gmail.com or The Malta Trust Foundation via info@maltatrustfoundation.org.

History of Para sport for visually impaired athletes

In 1964, recognising that there were many more people with visual impairments, amputations, cerebral palsy and other disabilities who wanted to compete in sports, the International Sports Organisation for the Disabled (ISOD) was founded. ISOD became a growing force and pushed hard for the inclusion of blind athletes into the Toronto 1976 Paralympics, with Goalball becoming the first sport for people with visual impairments on the Paralympic programme.

Nowadays, the main international bodies for blind and visually impaired sport are the International Blind Sport Association and the International Paralympic Committee. Judo became the second visual impairment-specific sport to be included on the Paralympic programme in Seoul, South Korea. Blind football (football-5-a-side) rounded-off the current trio of sports when it made its debut at Athens 2004.

Today there are 8 sports on the Paralympic Programme that include a blind or visual impairment category, including: Athletics, Swimming, Judo, Rowing, Triathlon, 5-a-side football (Blind Football), Cycling and Goalball. Various adapted equipment is used in Blind Sport and VI Para Sport, with a mix of physical and technological adaptations relating to communicating with or guiding blind and visually impaired athletes in their sport. For instance, the footballs used in Blind Futsal generate sound so that athletes can sense and gauge its location on the pitch. Similarly, blind and visually impaired individuals who participate in athletics run alongside their running guide, with the latter being an able-bodied sighted runner who is tied to the blind or visually impaired athlete at the wrist using a specialised band known as a 'tether'.

4.4 National Classification in Para Sport Development Project

MPC successfully hosted its **Para Sport Classification Development Seminar**, a first-of-its kind in Malta. Held over three days between 28th-30th October 2022, the Para Sport Classification Development Seminar served as an introductory course to classification in Para sport and was led by international experts - **Prof. Bartosz Molik** and **Mr. Iain Gowans, PLY**.

The development seminar combined theoretical and practical sessions relating to the framework for classification in Para sport, spanning all eligible impairment types (physical, visual, and intellectual impairments) and multiple Para sport disciplines. The seminar was also designed to introduce participants to the difference between, on the one hand, the methodology and process for Para sport classification and, on the other hand, medical evaluation. The theoretical sessions were supplemented with practical sessions in classification, including video analysis and an observational session during a wheelchair basketball training session and friendly match played by the Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association.

The development seminar was attended by a diverse range of healthcare and sports professionals (including physiotherapists, medical doctors, sports scientists, strength & conditioning coaches, coaches), together with sports administrators and students pursuing studies in these areas. The seminar was concluded with a workshop aimed at engaging in a critical debate on the framework required to implement a national strategy and action plan for Para sport classification in Malta. The aim of the strategy, among other objectives, is to: establish a local pool of medical, healthcare and sports professionals knowledgeable in Para sport classification; setting up a national classification panel; increasing the opportunities for participation of Para athletes in local and national competitions; creating a patient-athlete referral system; and empowering participants to take a more pro-active role in Para sport development.



Participants were awarded a Level 1 national classifier accreditation, becoming Malta's first ever professionals to attain this award. Going forward, MPC will endeavour to organise additional development and training seminars in Para sport classification, with the objective of furthering knowledge in classification in specific Para sport disciplines.

The seminar was hosted at the Trophies Lounge conference facility at the National Football Stadium, Ta' Qali, with the support of the **Malta Football Association**. The MPC also expresses its gratitude to the **Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector**, through the funding obtained for this project pursuant to the **Training Initiatives Scheme 2022**.



Learn more about our Para sport Classification Project international speakers:

Prof. Bartosz Molik is a physiotherapist, full-time Professor and Rectorat at the Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw, having served as an evaluator in several Doctoral defences within adapted physical activity and disability sport. Prof. Molik is a member of the Classification Committee within the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation and acts an international classifier and international classifier instructor in wheelchair basketball. Prof. Molik is a former wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby coach himself (assistant coach of Polish national team).

Paralympian *Iain Gowans* competed in Para swimming at the Atlanta Paralympic Games in 1996, reaching the finals. Mr. Gowans spent many years within the National Paralympic Committee for Great Britain - first as an administrator for the Athens Games in 2004 and then as Athlete Services Manager until 2011, before joining the Organising Committee of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games as Classification Manager. Mr Gowans is one of the few people in the world who has worked full-time in classification ever since. In 2013 Iain re-joined the NPC for Great Britain, becoming its first Classification Manager, leading the development of ground-breaking education resources. Since September 2021, Iain a PhD full- time research at Loughborough University, with his research focusing on the optimisation of the integrity of the classification process in Para sport.

FUNDRAISING - JULIAN BAJADA 28KM ROWING CHALLENGE

On **28 June 2022**, Para Athlete and MPC Secretary General **Julian Bajada** successfully completed a **28km indoor rowing challenge** to support the development of Malta's first national Paralympic Rowing team. This challenge was the longest ever distance to be rowed by a Paralympic Athlete in Malta and the equivalent of rowing the entire coast of Malta, from tip-to-tip. Julian, a 28-year-old athlete born with multiple physical disabilities in both his arms and legs took on the challenge to encourage and inspire other individuals with physical impairments to take up Paralympic Sport and unlock their true potential.

The funds raised through the challenge, totalling *circa* **€50,000**, will be invested in **purchasing specialised adapted Paralympic Rowing boats**, with adaptations such as a fixed seat and floaters, which are appropriate for Para athletes with various physical disabilities, including wheelchair users, amputees and other physical impairments. In addition, the funds will support the necessary infrastructural investment and sport development programme. The programme will pursue the dual aim of increased participation in Paralympic Rowing at grassroots & competitive levels, locally and internationally - across all ages groups and level of abilities, including sport for one's individual well-being and healthy living.



The Paralympic Rowing programme will be co-developed by the MPC and Siggiewi Rowing Club (**SRC**). Siggiewi Rowing Club is at the forefront of the development of Paralympic Rowing in Malta, being the first Maltese rowing club to have Para athletes within its ranks and embeds Paralympic Rowing as a core pillar of its growth strategy. The Club prides itself to have with us an excellent mix of athletes, Para athletes, and athletes with intellectual disability, all ages (Junior to Master), female and male. Some row to compete and excel, others to self-improve, for rehab, or on a recreational basis and have been training under the guidance of Coach Juan Farrugia.

First introduced at the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games, Para Rowing has established itself as a well-developed and ever-growing Paralympic Sport. Para Rowing offers multiple benefits. Specifically, Para Rowing is suitable for various physical impairment types, including amputees, wheelchair users, mobility impairments, visual impairments, and other lower, upper or even fully body physical impairments. Para Rowing also offers the opportunity for both individual and team-based training and competitions, combining strength and conditioning, cardiovascular physical activity and a variety of both sprint and long distance events.

The challenge also aims to raise awareness on Paralympic Sport to encourage others to join the movement. In Julian's own words: *"Paralympic Sport has the power to change lives, not only for individuals with physical impairments to believe in their own abilities and reach new heights, but for society to embrace the Paralympic values of courage, determination, inspiration and equality."*



The MPC wishes to express its gratitude towards **every individual who supported this challenge**, through the support shown in varying degrees and means, including by way of the generous donations from many. In particular, the MPC is extremely grateful for the generous support of the **sponsors**, without whom the success of this challenge would not have been achieved:

Platinum Sponsors



Gold Sponsors



Bronze Sponsors



Further information on the is available on <https://www.maltapara.com/rowingchallenge2022>.

4 BRAND DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The MPC values the importance of creating a brand identity to which society can relate to, a brand centred upon the abilities of its Para athletes and a brand embodying the Paralympic values. Through its website, social media channels, and relations with independent media houses, the MPC has put together a multi-faceted distribution platform to effectively deliver its message to the widest audience possible.

3.1 Online and Social Media Channels

Website: www.maltapara.com
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MaltaParalympicCommittee/>
Instagram: [paralympics_malta](https://www.instagram.com/paralympics_malta)

In 2022, MPC saw its following on social media increase significantly, reaching 4,000+ followers on Facebook, up from 3,600 + followers at the beginning of the year and attaining a steady and consistent average organic reach of 5,000 + per post. The MPC notes that the increased engagement across its social media platforms resulted in direct leads and contact with individuals, or their parents, who were interested in learning more about Para sport and how they can start practicing a Para sport. This trend demonstrates the MPC's effective use of social media to reach new prospective Para athletes, as well as encouraging the wider sporting community and Maltese society to feel encouraged and inspired through the activities undertaken by the MPC and the achievements of local Para athletes. These outreach initiatives play a significant role in attracting new Para athletes and the MPC remains committed to maximising the outreach through its social media channels.

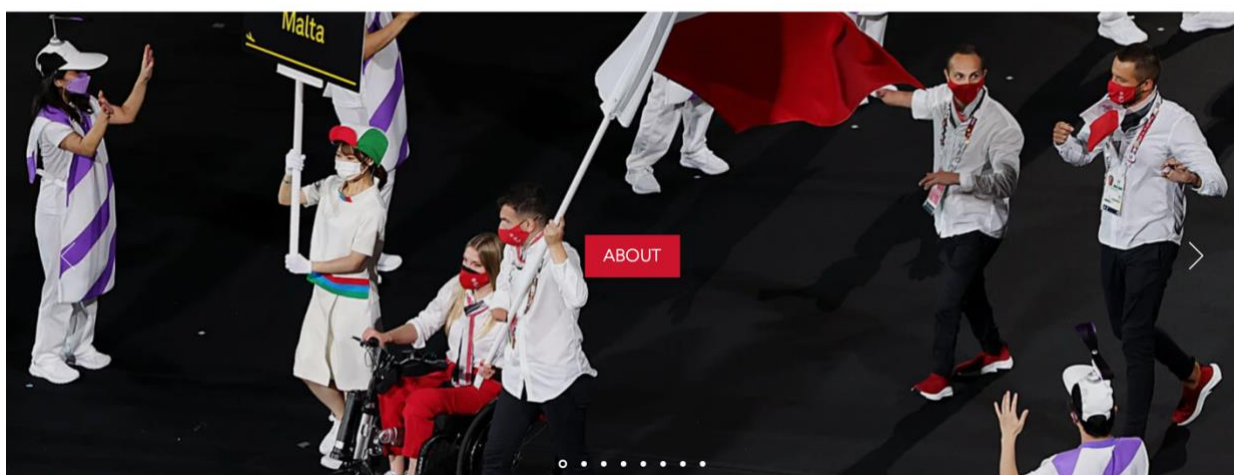
3.2 Revamp of Website

In 2022, MPC revamped the look and feel of its website - opting for a modern and minimalistic design dominated by the Maltese flag colours. Going forward, MPC intends to extend the scope of the content available on its website, including by way of the introduction of a dedicated news section where official press releases will be published by MPC, together with sub-pages MPC's projects.



~ Inclusion meets Excellence ~

Home About Find a Para Sport Meet the Team Rowing Challenge 2022 More



3.3 History of Malta at the Paralympic Games Campaign Month

One of the hallmark campaigns of MPC in 2022 was its social media campaign celebrating the history of Malta at the Paralympic Games. The campaign, lasting three weeks between 3 August to 20 August, took our audience on a journey back in time, from the early 1950s when Malta first became active in Paralympic Sport all the way through to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

The underlying objective of the campaign was to shed light and afford due recognition to the various achievements attained by Maltese Para Athletes and other activists in Paralympic Sport – from the earlier pioneers who championed the cause and won medals in the 1960s-1980s era, to the catalysts who gave a new lease of life to Paralympic Sport in Malta from 2008 onwards.

Key highlights from the campaign included the following historic moments, fun facts and trivia:

1956 *Malta Polio Fund sets up Paralysis Rehabilitation Fund in 1956:* Just a few years following the aftermath of World War II, the Malta Polio Fund set up a committee known as the 'Infantile Paralysis Rehabilitation Fund' in 1956. The committee was dedicated towards organising sports activities and competitions for individuals with disabilities, with a focus on athletes suffering from polio - a medical condition causing paralysis that was common in the post-war era. The committee is still around today, under the name 'Physically Disabled Rehabilitation Centre', situated in Corradino.

Malta Participates in Stoke Mandeville Games 1957-1960: Between 1957-1960, Malta was represented at every edition of the annual Stoke Mandeville Games - the precursor to the Paralympic Games. The Games were a multi-Para Sport event organised at the sports grounds of the Stoke Mandeville Hospital - or what is now known as the birthplace of the global Paralympic Movement.

1960 *Rome 1960 Paralympic Games debut for Malta:* Malta made its debut at the 1960 Paralympic Games held in Rome, the eternal city. The 1960 Games were the first games held in the same city and in parallel with the Olympic Games, with 400 Paralympians from 23 countries competing for glory. The 1960 edition was one of Malta's most successful Paralympic Games. Malta's first ever Paralympians brought home no less than FOUR Paralympic medals from Rome 1960. Can you guess how many Gold, Silver or Bronze they won? Hint: x 2 medals in Para Athletics (Angela Scicluna and Claude Markham), x 1 medal in Para Table Tennis (Moses Azzopardi), and x 1 medal in Para Snooker (George Portelli).

1964 *Tokyo 1964 - more medals For Malta:* In the same year that Malta attained its independence, Malta's Paralympians made the nation proud by bringing home more medals at the Tokyo 1964 Paralympic Games, with Claude Markham and George Portelli netting us TWO Bronze medals in Para Snooker.

1966 *Stoke Mandeville Games 1966 – more success for team Malta:* Between 26th-30th July 1966, Malta was represented in the annual Stoke Mandeville Games by one of our largest multi-sport contingents in our Para Sport history. Victor Galea brought home a gold medal in the 100m wheelchair athletics dash, whilst John Pace and Charles Palmier netted bronze medals in Para Shot Put and Para Shooting respectively. The Maltese contingent also included Para Athletes Adelina Mifsud, Helen Tonna and John Micallef.

1968 *Tel Aviv 1968 Paralympic Games - Six Maltese Paralympians Compete:* The 1968 Paralympic Games were held in Tel Aviv, Israel, organised under the name of the 17th International Stoke Mandeville Games.

A women's wheelchair basketball team event was added to the sports programme for the first time, with a total of 10 Paralympic Sports on the competition programme. 28 countries took part in this edition, with Canada, New Zealand, Jamaica, and Spain all making their debut! Malta was represented by a total of SIX Paralympians - Alfred Bugelli, Alfred Testa, Charles Miggiani, Mary Gatt, Victor Galea and May Bezzina, with the best result achieved by Victor Galea, finishing 6th place out of 64 Paralympians competing in the 100m wheelchair athletics sprint event.

1980 *Malta at the 1980 Arnhem Games:* After nearly two decades away Malta's last participation, two Maltese Paralympians raised the Maltese flag at the 1980 Arnhem Paralympic Games hosted in the Netherlands. Connie Camilleri and Lillian Sammut brought home TWO Bronze medals in the Para lawn bowls events, successfully marking Malta's return to the competition following a mini-hiatus.

1994 *Malta hosts first ever Para Swimming World Championships in 1994:* The Tal-Oroqq National Swimming Complex was the host of the first ever International Paralympic Committee Para Swimming World Championships held between 2nd – 8th November 1994. Nearly 500 Para Swimmers from 44 countries competed at the championships. The championships have become a bi-annual staple on the World Para Swimming competition calendar, with the next championships to be held in 2023 in Manchester.

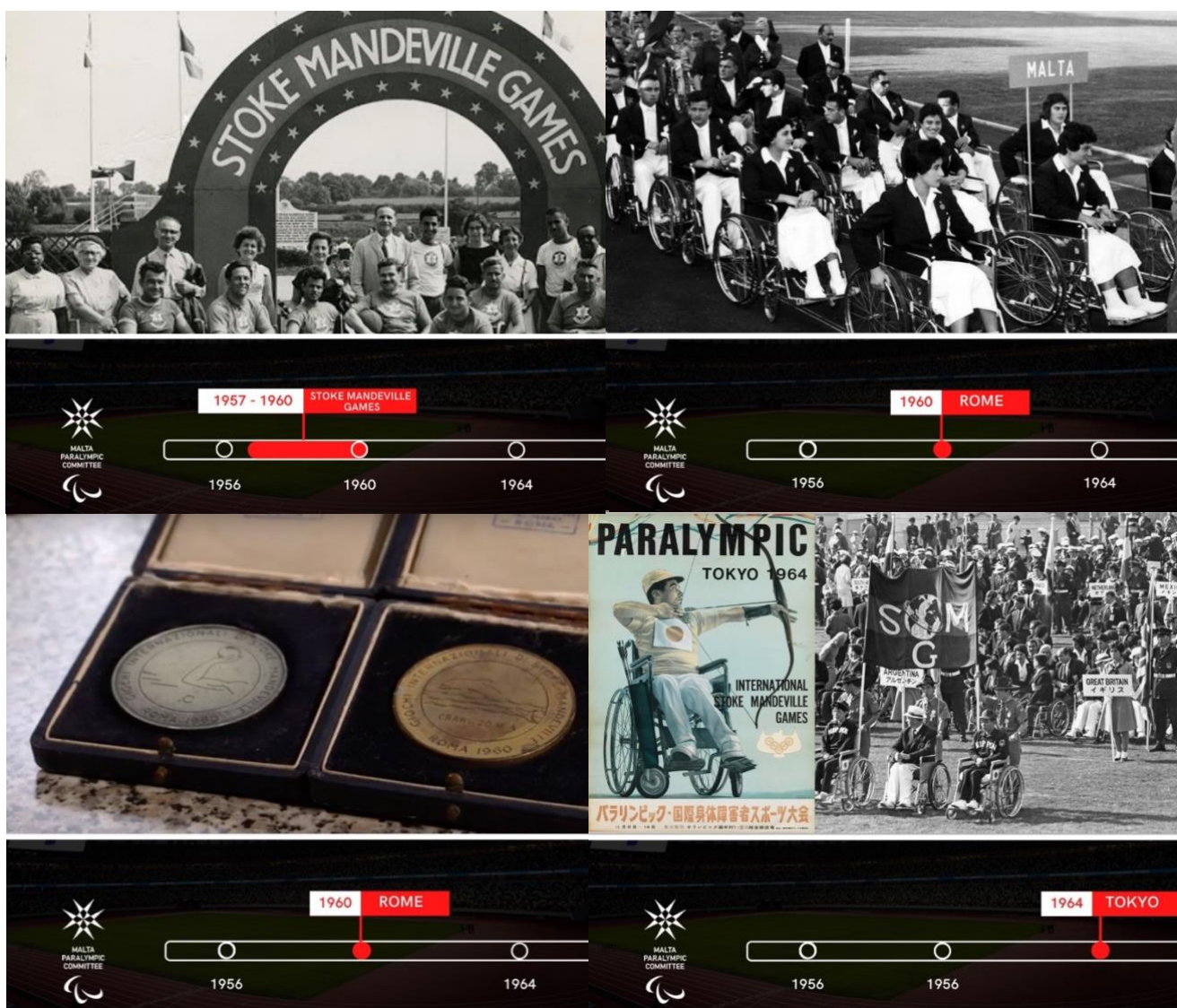
2008 *Malta returns to the Paralympic Games - Antonio Flores competes in Beijing 2008:* Finally, after more than 28 years without participating in the Paralympic Games, Malta returned to the world stage with Paralympian Antonio Flores competing in the Para Athletics sprint events at the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games. Antonio competed in the T44 100m sprint event, alongside Oscar Pistorius.

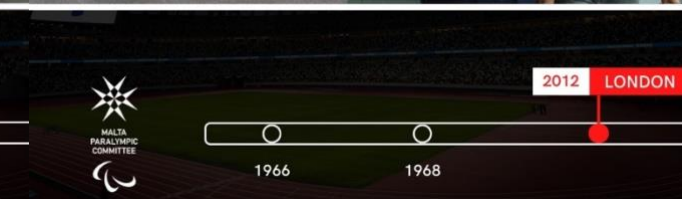
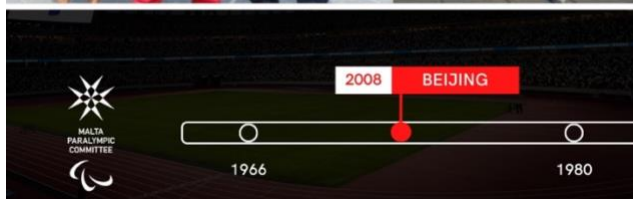
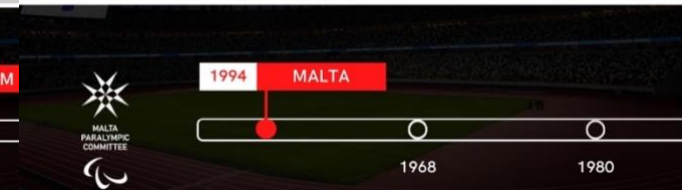
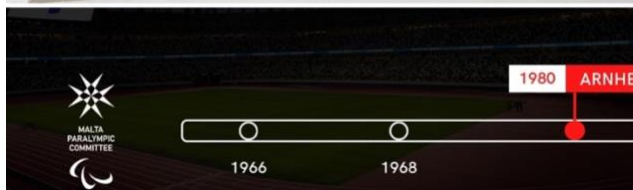
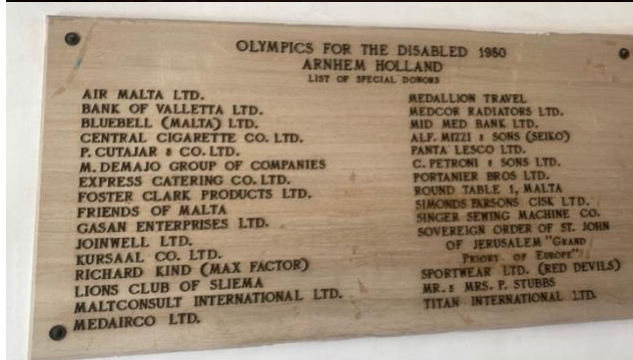
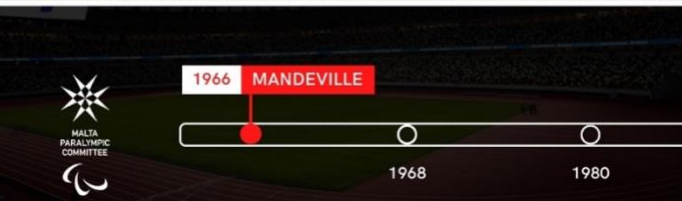
Antonio Flores is still a competitive athlete in Para Athletics more than 14 years later, competing at both local and international Para Athletics sprint events in the T64 class, following an amputation in 2017. The contingent in Beijing was led by Pippa Roberts, who remains active in Wheelchair Dance Sport and was key to kickstarting the local movement after so many years.

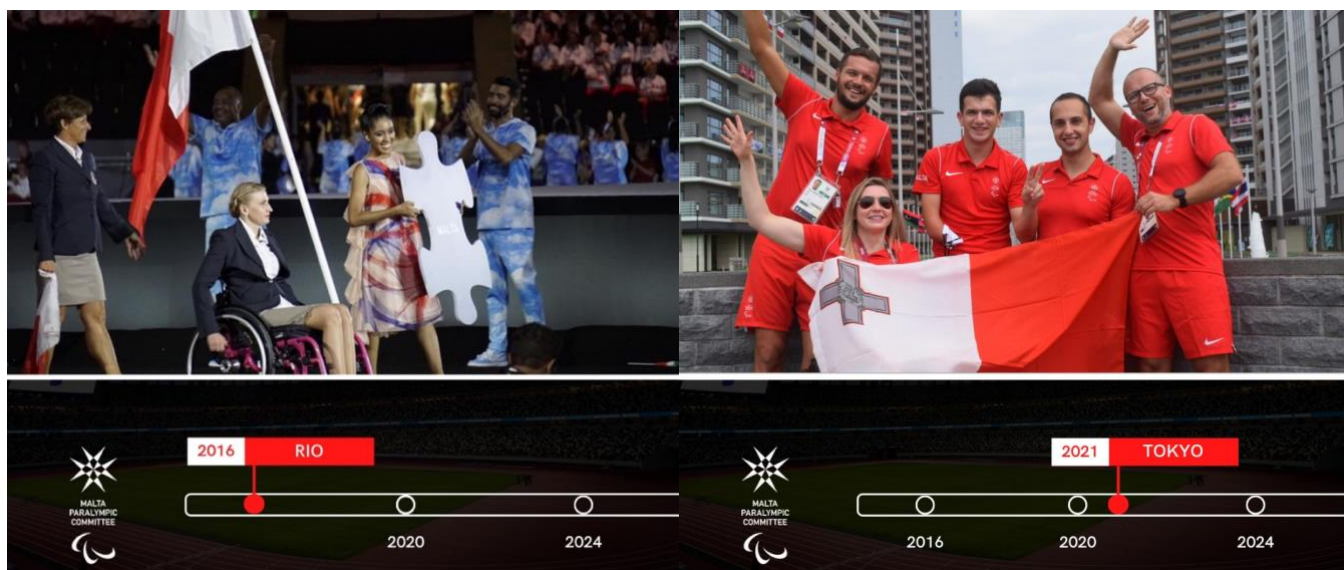
2012 *Malta represented by youngest Paralympian in London 2012:* Malta was represented by Para Swimmer Matthew Sultana, the youngest competitor from all participating countries at the Paralympic Games at the tender age of just 15 years old. Matthew competed in three events: S10 5m freestyle, S10 100m butterfly and SB9 50m breaststroke. The contingent was led by ultra tri-athlete Fabio Spiteri and coach Ebi Ebidanaid.

2016 *First Maltese female Para Swimmer makes it to Rio 2016:* Malta was represented for the first time ever by a female Para Swimmer, with Vladyslava Kravchenko competing at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games in the S5 50m backstroke, S5 50m butterfly and SB3 50m breaststroke events. Vladyslava was the victim of a spinal cord injury caused by an accident at an event in Malta, overcoming lifechanging obstacles to wave our national flag high at the Paralympic Games. The contingent was joined by coach Isabelle Zarb, and officials Nathan Farrugia and Adelaide Sammut.

2021 *ARIGATO TOKYO 2020[1]! - Malta represented by more than one Paralympian for the first time since the 1980 Paralympic Games:* Malta's legacy at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games is bolstered by the fact that Malta had two Paralympians compete at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, after having been represented by only one athlete in 2008, 2012 and 2016. Vladyslava Kravchenko became our first two-time Para swimming Paralympian competing in the S5 50m backstroke and butterfly events, joined by debutant Thomas Borg in the T47 100m and 400m Para athletics events. The contingent was made up of Chef de Mission and MPC Secretary General Julian Bajada, together with coaches Edward Caruana Dingli (Para Swimming) and Kevin Galea (Para Athletics).







Disclaimer: whilst MPC has used its reasonable endeavors to ensure the accuracy of the historical information summarised in the table above, the MPC cautions that it is reliant on the accuracy, or otherwise, of publicly available third-party reports and records and known to the MPC as at the date of this report.

3.4 MPC and Para athletes featured on various media

Over the course of 2022, multiple members of the Executive Committee, Para athletes and Para sport coaches were invited to share their experience in Paralympic sport and their vision for the future of Paralympic sport on various television programmes and were featured by various printed and online media houses, including interviews on TVM News, TVM Sports Panorama, TVM Sport, Zona Sport, Sport Extra, FIT AM, Times of Malta, Lovin Malta, Malta Today, The Malta Independent, Net TV, One News, Newsbook, FreeHour, Vibe FM Radio, Gadgets and Bulletproof Culture, among others.

Through these interviews, audiences obtained an insight into the aspirations of local Para athletes and the challenges they face and, more importantly, how they seek to overcome them. Moreover, these interviews afforded coaches with the opportunity to demonstrate how to integrate Para athletes within able-bodied clubs and teams, whilst also adding value by working closely with Para athletes to better understand how to enhance their sporting performance through adapted training techniques.

3.5 Introductory meetings with prospective Para athletes and parents/relatives

The MPC carried out a concerted effort to support prospective Para athletes and their parents/relatives by hosting a series of introductory meetings for young individuals with eligible impairments (physical, visual and, or intellectual, as the case may be).

These introductory sessions were aimed at providing an overview of the role and functions of the Malta Paralympic Committee and the objectives and values of the global Paralympic Movement. Moreover, the MPC provided attendees with an insight into the types of Para sports practised in Malta and how the MPC may support them in getting started.

The MPC hopes that introductory sessions such as those held in 2021 will serve not only as a guide to individuals with impairments to take up a Para sport, but to also instill a culture and mindset that is engrained in the Paralympic values and a 'can-do' attitude. This will, in turn, support young Para athletes and their parents in knowing that they have a future in Para sport and the benefits are theirs for the taking, in the foreknowledge that the Malta Paralympic Committee and local Para sport community will be there to support them in every step of their Para sport journey.

The MPC is encouraged by the positive feedback attained over the course of the introductory sessions and the immediate results registered, with a number of attendees subsequently keeping in touch with the MPC and taking the necessary steps to take up a Para sport.

3.6 Stakeholder consultation and engagement

In 2022, Malta Paralympic Committee adopted a policy of consulting and engaging with various organisations active in the areas of sports, disability, healthcare, advocacy, and social care. The aim of this exercise was to explore and evaluate potential areas of mutual interest, collaboration and support across Para sport development, Para athlete identification and pipeline development, awareness, and community building, as well as new avenues for projects and fundraising activities. In addition, this process enabled MPC to attain a better understanding of the key challenges facing the disability sector and the gaps in knowledge, resources, and support required.

Amongst other organisations and individuals, MPC engaged with **SportMalta, The Malta Federation of Organisations for Disability, The Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Agenzija Sapport, Malta Health Network, The Institute of Physical Activity and Sport (University of Malta), Sports and Physical Activity Department (Malta College of Art, Science and Technology - MCAST) Amputees 4 Amputees, The Malta Society of the Blind and the Rehab Unit at Karen Grech Hospital.**

MPC expresses its gratitude to its summer intern **JeanFred Agius**, who volunteered with the MPC over the summer months and lead the stakeholder consultation and network building exercise. JeanFred is himself a Para athlete (congenital cerebral palsy) who practices calisthenics and is in his final year of studies, pursuing a BSc Degree in Psychology at the University of Malta.

Relations with key sports stakeholders

International Paralympic Committee

Over the course of the year, the MPC continued to strengthen its relations with its main international counterparts, the International Paralympic Committee. The MPC is thankful for the IPC's continued support and guidance on Para sport development and educational activities, including the support provided by the IPC through the I'mPOSSIBLE educational programme resources and the National Paralympic Committees Development grant, among other support schemes.

Maltese Olympic Committee

The Malta Paralympic Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the Maltese Olympic Committee (MOC) for its support and practical guidance which has benefitted the Malta Paralympic Committee in implementing its objectives. Together, the national governing bodies for Olympic Sport and Paralympic Sport are actively seeking avenues for collaboration. MPC expects to formalise this closer collaboration through a memorandum of understanding between MPC and MOC, which it hopes to enter in 2023.

SportMalta

Our relations with SportMalta continue to deepen and we are pleased to report that Sport Malta has supported our initiatives, including by way of the granting of financial assistance for Para athletes and coaches in respect of their participation at international Para sport competitions and events. This financial support has ensured Para athletes are able to compete alongside other Para athletes in their respective Para sport classes, thus ensuring meaningful competition and other key opportunities, such as classification, ranking and qualification opportunities. The MPC is also seeking to strengthen these ties by working closely with the Sports Promotion Unit within Sport Malta to raise awareness on Paralympic Sport and drive its uptake.

Deaf Sports

The MPC is honoured to have as its former Vice-President, Mr. George Vella, one of Malta's foremost deaf athletes in long-distance athletics event and President of the Malta Deaf Sports Association. This ensures that our two entities work hand-in-hand for the benefit of their members and affiliated athletes. The MPC and Malta Deaf Sports Association are currently in discussions on the creation of a new organisational structure that is better suited and equipped to develop Deaf Sports in Malta and meet the requirements of Deaf Athletes in Malta, with a view to establishing a structure that will see the two entities work closer with one another, thus alleviating administrative burdens.

Para Athletes Council

The MPC is devoted to implementing the IPC's commitment of putting athletes at the heart of Paralympic Sport. Strong athlete representation in decision-making processes was one of the top priorities for the newly elected Executive Committee and the first Malta Paralympic Athletes' Council was formed back in 2018. The MPC understands that Para athletes are the present and future of the organisation and recognises that giving a voice to Para athletes and providing them with opportunities to take ownership of Para sport projects and initiatives will be key to empowering the Para sport leaders of tomorrow.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Guided by our ethos of *Inclusion meets Excellence*, the Malta Paralympic Committee is committed to remaining steadfast in its mission to empower individuals with physical impairments to fulfil their full potential, leaving a positive impact on society in the process.

Finally, the Malta Paralympic Committee wishes to thank its dedicated Para athletes, coaches, parents, sports administrators, and other stakeholders who are fundamental in seeing our vision for Paralympic Sport in Malta come to fruition.

Signed by:



Prof. Joseph N. Grima
MPC President



Dr Julian Bajada
MPC Secretary General

2022 - YEAR IN REVIEW



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**MALTA
PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**



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The Malta Paralympic Committee is a non-profit organisation, registered in Malta with the Office of the Commissioner of Voluntary Organisations as a voluntary organisation with registration number VO/1616 and as a sports association with Sport Malta with registration number SM/A170. The Malta Paralympic Committee is a full member of the International Paralympic Committee.

