

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



MALTA
PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE



FORWARD

It is our privilege to be presenting you with the fifth Annual Report of the Malta Paralympic Committee (MPC), covering the period from **1 January 2023** to **31 December 2023**.

2023 marked a particularly special year for MPC, coinciding with the 5th year anniversary from its formal re-establishment in 2018. Over the past years, we have seen new Para athletes join the Paralympic Movement and a wider variety of Para sports develop in Malta, including Para Athletics, Para Swimming, Para Rowing, Wheelchair Basketball, Para Powerlifting, Frame Football, Boccia, Para Sailing, Wheelchair Dance Sport, Para Darts, Para Archery, Para Badminton, Para Judo, Para Karate and more.

In 2023, MPC also benefitted from a watershed moment as it took a leap forward in strengthening its organisational capacity and operational resources through the engagement of MPC's first full-time Administration and Impact Officer, Ms. Rachel Cachia. By having an individual dedicated to MPC's Para Sport Development, Educational, and Awareness and Community Engagement activities, MPC is better equipped to achieve its objectives. MPC extends its heartfelt thanks to Ms. Rachel Cachia for hitting the ground running in her first months with MPC and already leaving an impact, particularly through the grassroots and recruitment initiatives being undertaken within schools and other educational institutions.

The year culminated in a Para Sport Exhibition and Para Sport Impact Awards Ceremony hosted under the patronage of the Speaker of the House of Representatives in September 2023. The event brought together participants and winners of the first edition of the Para Sport Impact Competition, as well as past and present Para athletes and Para sport administrators, among other stakeholders. The event was a reminder of the achievements, efforts, opportunities, changes and challenges we have attained and endured together within the local Para sport community over the years. It also served as a catalyst for the next five years and our aspirations to build a better future for Maltese Para athletes and Para sport. As we look towards the next five years, MPC calls upon society to do its part to ensure that sport is enjoyed by all as part of our fundamental human right to a fulfilling, meaningful and dignifying life. It is critical to remind ourselves that participation in sport is recognised as a human right under the terms of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a component of '*participation in the cultural life of the community*'. Moreover, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guarantees the right to '*full and effective participation and inclusion in society on an equal basis with others*.'

At this important juncture in our development, Malta Paralympic Committee expresses its deepest gratitude towards all stakeholders who have been part of the journey from day one. In particular, MPC is thankful for the support and contributions of the International Paralympic Committee, Maltese Olympic Committee, the National Sports Associations and Federations, Sport Malta, the Para Athletes Council, Government Ministries and entities (including the Ministry for Education and Sport and the Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector), the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, sports clubs, coaches, parents, NGOs, project partners, volunteers, collaborators, sponsors, private entities and individuals with whom MPC has collaborated with in 2023. MPC also appreciates the work being done by some of Malta's most inclusive mainstream sports clubs who are making a significant contribution to Para sport, including Siggiewi Rowing Club, Exiles SC, Finz Aquatics, Coach Leah Satariano, Żurrieq Wolves Athletics Club, La Salle Karate Club,

ParaVolley Malta, M.W.B.A and Frame Football Malta, amongst others. Above all, MPC is grateful for the outstanding commitment of Malta's very own Para athletes - your future is bright

Looking ahead, and as we head into the year of the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, MPC acknowledges that the next important milestone will be to ensure that the dual objectives of (i) opening up sports to all, through enhanced accessibility to sport; and (ii) augmenting the levels reached by our competitive Para athletes, are met within the short-to-medium term of the current 2022-2024 development cycle.

As we build up to Paris 2024, MPC is excited for the opportunity to emulate the Game's motto of '*Games wide open*' - a motto that highlights the ambition of bringing sport closer to our communities and widening the reach and impact of Para sport. In 2024, MPC will launch a series of initiatives centred around the Games, with the aim of transforming lives and inspiring our society to embrace sport as an integral part of our lives and as a key enabler for lifelong learning, healthy and active living and much more.

Yours sincerely,

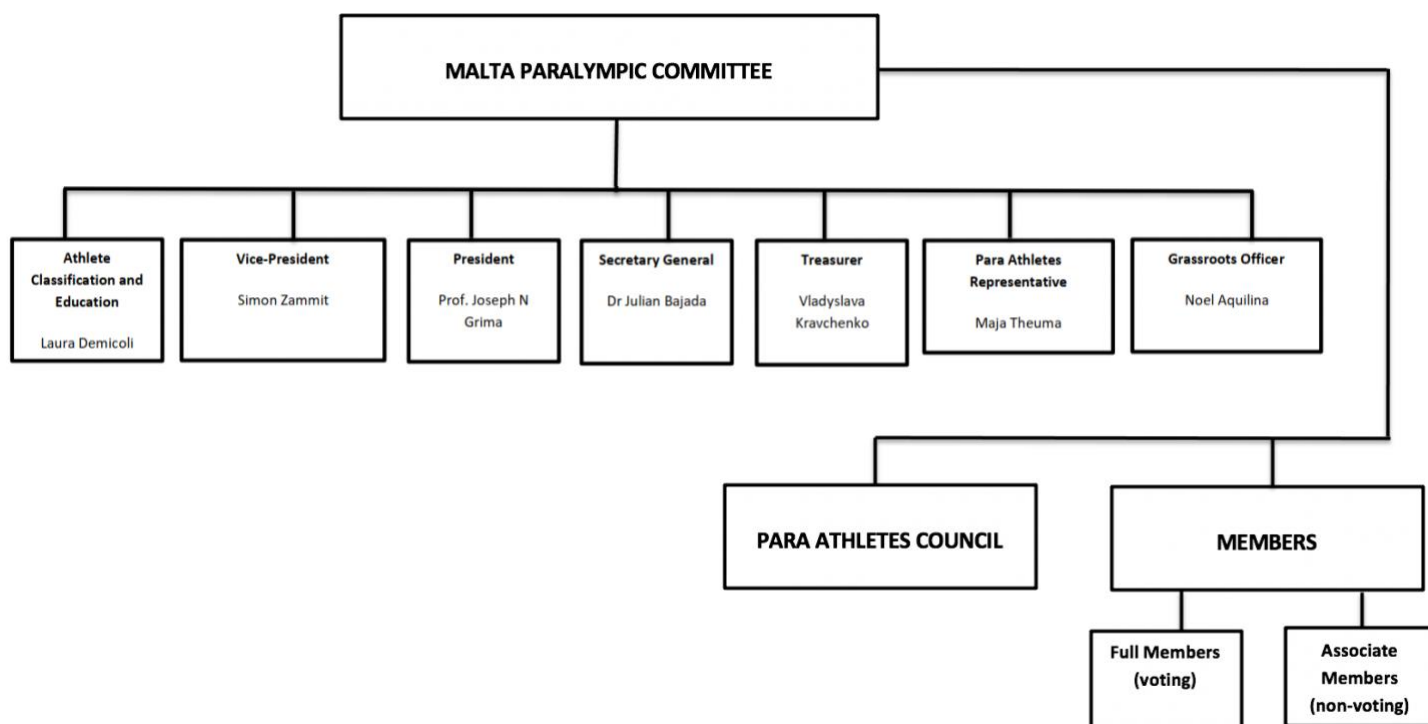
Executive Committee of the Malta Paralympic Committee

CONTENTS

1. Organisational Structure and membership within the IPC and EPC
2. Education & Awareness
3. Para Sport Development and Competitions
4. SDG Goals
5. Concluding Remarks

1. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MPC

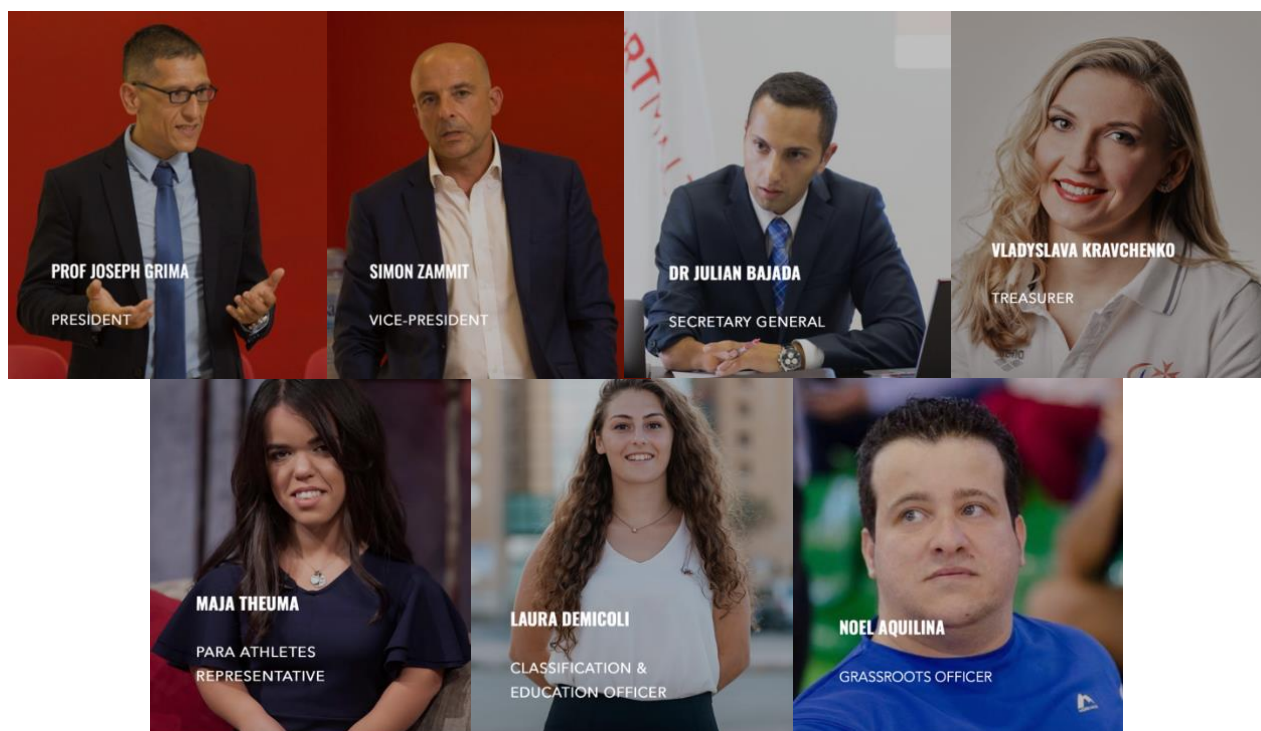
1.1 Organisational Structure



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 2023.

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 MPC's first full-time Administration and Impact Officer

In 2023 MPC benefitted from a watershed moment as it took a leap forward in strengthening its organisational capacity and operational resources through the engagement of MPC's first full-time Administration and Impact Officer, Ms. Rachel Cachia.

Rachel Cachia brings over 10 years' experience in the education, disability and sports sectors, having previously worked as a Learning Support Educator (LSE). As an LSE, Rachel played a pivotal role in designing, implementing and monitoring individual educational programmes ('IEPS') that are tailor-made to the personal needs, learning abilities and disabilities of the students concerned, including through the use of assistive technologies and adapted curriculum materials, and working alongside the student, parents, educational professionals and the wider school staff. This professional background is especially beneficial as it enables Rachel to support the MPC in assessing existing and potential Para athletes and supporting them in taking up a Para sport that is suited to their impairment type and sporting objectives. Ms. Cachia is responsible for implementing various initiatives across MPC's Para Sport Development, Educational, and Awareness and Community Engagement activities.

Rachel Cachia is seconded to the MPC via The Government of Malta's Public Sector Employee Secondment Scheme for public sector employees seconded to voluntary non-profit organisations.

1.1.3 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 2023 are listed hereunder, totalling 24 members across both categories:

Full Members (14 members):

- Malta Archery Association
- Malta Badminton Association
- Malta Canoeing Association
- Malta Cycling Federation
- Malta Judo Federation
- Malta 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 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 Dance Sport 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.

In 2024, MPC expects to present proposals to update its statute to reflect changes in the relevant regulatory and international frameworks, such as the updates to the constitutions and by-laws of the

International Paralympic Committee, as well as the introduction of regulations applicable to sports bodies subject to the supervisory remit of the recently established Authority for Integrity in Maltese Sport (AIMS). Members with voting rights will be notified of the proposed changes to be put forward for consideration and, if deemed fit, approval at the next annual general meeting of MPC to be held in 2024 (subject to approval, if required, from the International Paralympic Committee, AIMS and/or the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations).

1.1.4 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** (Strength and Conditioning)

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 2023, the Para Athletes Council played a central role in the design and implementation of the Para Sport Impact Competition and the 5th Year Anniversary Awards Night and Para Sport Exhibition respectively. In addition, members of the Para Athletes Council contributed towards the I'mPOSSIBLE Educational Programme through presentations, Q&As and practical sessions held at the participating schools.

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 (registration number VO/1616) and registered as a Sports Association with SportMalta (registration number 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.

Importantly, MPC was formally recognised in Malta's statute books for the first time in legislative history. The Sports Governance and Integrity Act (Chapter 626 of the Laws of Malta), legally recognises Malta Paralympic Committee's automatic enrolment with the Maltese Authority for

Integrity in Sports (AIMS), alongside the Maltese Olympic Committee. This legal recognition is a key step in ensuring the long-term organisational continuity of the MPC for years to come.

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 (*info@paralympic.mt*) 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 two members out of the President, Secretary General and Treasurer. 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.paralympic.mt/news>.

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 2023. 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 2023.

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 2023.

Specifically, in terms of Schedule 1 to subsidiary legislation 492.2., in 2023 MPC was classified a Category 2 voluntary organisation on the ground that that the income of the MPC generated between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2023, exceeded €50,000 but did not exceed €250,000. MPC's classification thus remains unchanged from its Category 2 status in the previous financial year ended 31 December 2022.

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 accounting verification services required in respect of its annual accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2023. 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 2023.¹

The appointment of Mr. Stephen Paris in respect of the annual accounts of the MPC for the year ended 31 December 2023 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 2024.

¹ Mr. Stephen Paris previously acted in this role in respect of the annual accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2022.

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
PARALYMPIC
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.

**EUROPEAN
PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**



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>.

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 became 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 2023, MPC was allocated a grant pursuant to the **IPC 2023 NPCDP (National Paralympic Committees Development Programme)**, in an amount of just under €10,000 and which may be utilised by the end of 2024. 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 personnel 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 Para sport development, education and awareness and community engagement. This may include utilisation of the grant across the I'mPOSSIBLE Education Programme 2023/2024, 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, among other activities. The funds may also be utilised for marketing and promotional 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 2024, 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' page on the website of the IPC on <https://www.paralympic.org/agitos-foundation>.

1.5.4 IPC Conference and Extraordinary General Assembly 2023

MPC participated in the IPC's three-day **IPC Conference and IPC Extraordinary General Assembly 2023**, held in Manama, Bahrain between the 27th to 29th September 2023. Bringing together 208 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 capital city of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

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.

MPC was represented by Dr. Julian Bajada (MPC Secretary General) and Ms. Vladyslava Kravchenko PLY (MPC Treasurer and member of the Athletes Council of the International Paralympic Committee).

During the Extraordinary General Assembly 2023, the Member organisations voted to, among other matters:

- Officially ratify the membership of the IPC to 208 (183 National Paralympic Committees), welcoming the National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) of Bangladesh, Kosovo; and Saudi Arabia (who previously were an NPC but are now an integrated NOC (National Olympic Committee), the International Federations (IFs) of the International Ski and Snowboard Federation (FIS), and the International Biathlon Union (IBU). Bangladesh became the 45th NPC from Asia; Kosovo the 49th from the European region; and FIS and the IBU are respectively the 16th and 17th IFs.
- Partially suspend the National Paralympic Committee of Russia and Belarus, as a result of which NPC Russia's and NPC Belarus' membership rights are suspended for two years (subject to reassessment at the next ordinary General Assembly) with the exception that their athletes (and related support personnel) will be eligible to participate in an individual and neutral capacity (this means no teams) in the Paralympic Games and World and Regional Championships and sanctioned competitions in the six sports for which the IPC acts as international federation. In each case, this is subject to athletes and support personnel meeting such conditions of participation set by the IPC Governing Board. NPC Russia and NPC Belarus is also not allowed to organise any sport event/competition involving other IPC members. The decision by IPC members to partially suspend NPC Russia and NPC Belarus is due to its inability to comply with its membership obligations, under the 2011 and 2022 versions of the IPC Constitution which govern the NPC's activities.

1.5.5 First edition of the Para Sport Awards - MPC recognised on the world stage

The winners of the **2023 PARA SPORT Awards** were presented at a ceremony in Bahrain on 27th September 2023, held during the IPC's General Assembly and Conference in Manama, Bahrain. The PARA SPORT Awards celebrate those whose efforts have contributed to strengthening the impact of Para sports worldwide. In addition to awards for summer and winter sport athletes, there are categories for coaches, International Paralympic Committee members, and volunteers.

Malta Paralympic Committee was short-listed among the three finalists in the **City Community Impact Award**, alongside the National Paralympic Committees of the Republic of Korea and NPC Japan. MPC was shortlisted in this category for its community engagement and impact work through its implementation of the I'mPOSSIBLE Education Programme and the inaugural edition of the Para Sport Impact Competition launched in 2023.



Moreover, Vladyslava Kravchenko PLY (MPC Treasurer and member of the IPC Athletes Council) was amongst the winners of the **2023 International Women's Day Recognition Awards in the Emerging Leaders category**. In 2015 she was selected by the European Paralympic Committee for the Youth Ambassadors programme to raise awareness about the Paralympic Movement in Europe. The following year, at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, Vladyslava Kravchenko became the first female swimmer, and the first female athlete since 1980 to represent Malta at the Paralympic Games. In 2017, she received the Queen's Young Leaders Award from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of her work in Para sport in her community. Kravchenko has become a leading advocate for persons with disabilities in Malta. She was appointed by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Malta to a Steering Committee, which set up the first formal legal structure of the Malta Paralympic Committee and Athletes' Council.

The awards, which the IPC has been running since 2013, recognise women in the Paralympic Movement who inspire and emulate the Paralympic ideals and serve as positive role models. The winners were chosen by members of the IPC Governing Board following nominations from across the Paralympic membership. Commenting on the awards, Andrew Parsons, IPC President highlighted that: *"It is particularly important for the Paralympic Movement to have strong growth in female representation. In the last year alone the IPC Senior Executive Team has become 50 percent female, and six of the 14 IPC Governing Board members are women. We are seeing more women in leadership positions amongst our members, where they are creating new platforms for female athletes, coaches, and officials to excel."*



Photo credits: International Paralympic Committee

1.5.6 MPC participates in IPC Athletes Forum 2023

More than 60 athlete representatives from across the Paralympic Movement were in Icheon, Korea, between 25-27 June participating in the third **IPC Athletes' Forum**, with Malta being represented by Maja Theuma (MPC Athlete Council Chairperson) and Vladyslava Kravchenko PLY (MPC Treasurer and member of IPC Athlete Council).

Hosted by the Korean Paralympic Committee (KPC) at their National Training Centre, with the support of the BDH Foundation, the Forum brought together athlete representatives from National Paralympic Committees, International Federations, Regional Organisations and International Organisations of Sport for the Disabled. Athlete representatives from the IOC Athletes' Commission and the WADA Athlete Council were also in attendance, as were members of the IPC Governing Board and management team. Participants engaged on discussions on a variety of topics including Para sports leadership, anti-doping, classification, athlete representation and athlete well-being and career transition.



Photo credits: International Paralympic Committee

Maja Theuma described the IPC Athletes' Forum to be *"A fantastic opportunity for the Para athlete community to connect with the IPC and served as a great platform to share best practices within athletes across the Paralympic Movement"*, emphasising that she believes that *"the athlete's voice is the most prominent it has ever been and feel that the IPC Governing Board and IPC are fully supportive of initiatives that develop athletes within the Paralympic Movement. As I'm on my way back home, I feel that I am more connected, educated, and empowered to continue fighting for the rights Para athletes in Malta deserve."*

During the panel discussion on Athlete Representation Best Practices - Athlete Leadership Pathway, esteemed panellists including Mr. Eui Hyun Shin, Athlete Representative of Korea, Mr. Jeongmin Lee, Athlete Representative of the Asian Paralympic Committee, and Maja Theuma, engaged in an insightful conversation about their roles as athlete leaders and their experiences as members of the Athlete Council in their respective countries. The panellists provided valuable tips for National Paralympic Committees interested in establishing an athlete council.



Photo credits: International Paralympic Committee

1.5.7 Malta's two-time Paralympian appointed to the International Paralympic Committee Athletes' Council

Malta's two-time Paralympian, Vladyslava Kravchenko PLY has been appointed as a member at Large of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Athletes' Council for the coming year.

Kravchenko became the first female swimmer and the first female athlete since 1980 to represent Malta at the Paralympic Games in Rio 2016 and in Tokyo 2020. She completed a master's degree in Sport Management, Politics and International Development at prestigious Loughborough University as part of the Malta Sport Scholarship.

The IPC Athletes' Council is a group of elected and co-opted athlete representatives who act as the collective voice of Paralympians and Para athletes within the IPC and the greater Paralympic Movement. Its role is to provide feedback and advice, and report to the IPC Governing Board on behalf of and in the interest of the athletes in all IPC matters.

The IPC Athletes' Council is currently made up of nine athletes in total, which includes the six summer athletes and three winter athletes. The five summer sport members in addition to Kravchenko are: Jitske Visser (Netherlands, Wheelchair basketball), Martina Caironi (Italy, Para Athletics), Omara Durand Elias (Cuba, Para Athletics), Takayuki Suzuki (Japan, Para Swimming), and Zahra Nemati (Iran, Para Archery). The three winter sport council members are Josh Dueck (Canada, Para Alpine Skiing), Birgit Skarstein (Norway, Para Nordic Skiing), and Mitchell Gourley (Australia, Para Alpine Skiing).

Kravchenko, who served as the Chair of the Malta Paralympic Athletes' Council from 2018-2022 and is currently the Treasurer of Malta Paralympic Committee, said:



"I believe that the Athletes Council is one of the most effective platforms that ensures that the athletes' voices are heard. Given that the Paralympic movement extends far beyond the Paralympic Games, I believe that it is imperative to maximise the amount and the diversity of these voices. My vision is for the Council to be more representative of the global Para athletes' community through which every athlete is empowered to convey their constructive feedback to the highest level of decision making."

1.5.8 EPC General Assembly and Conference

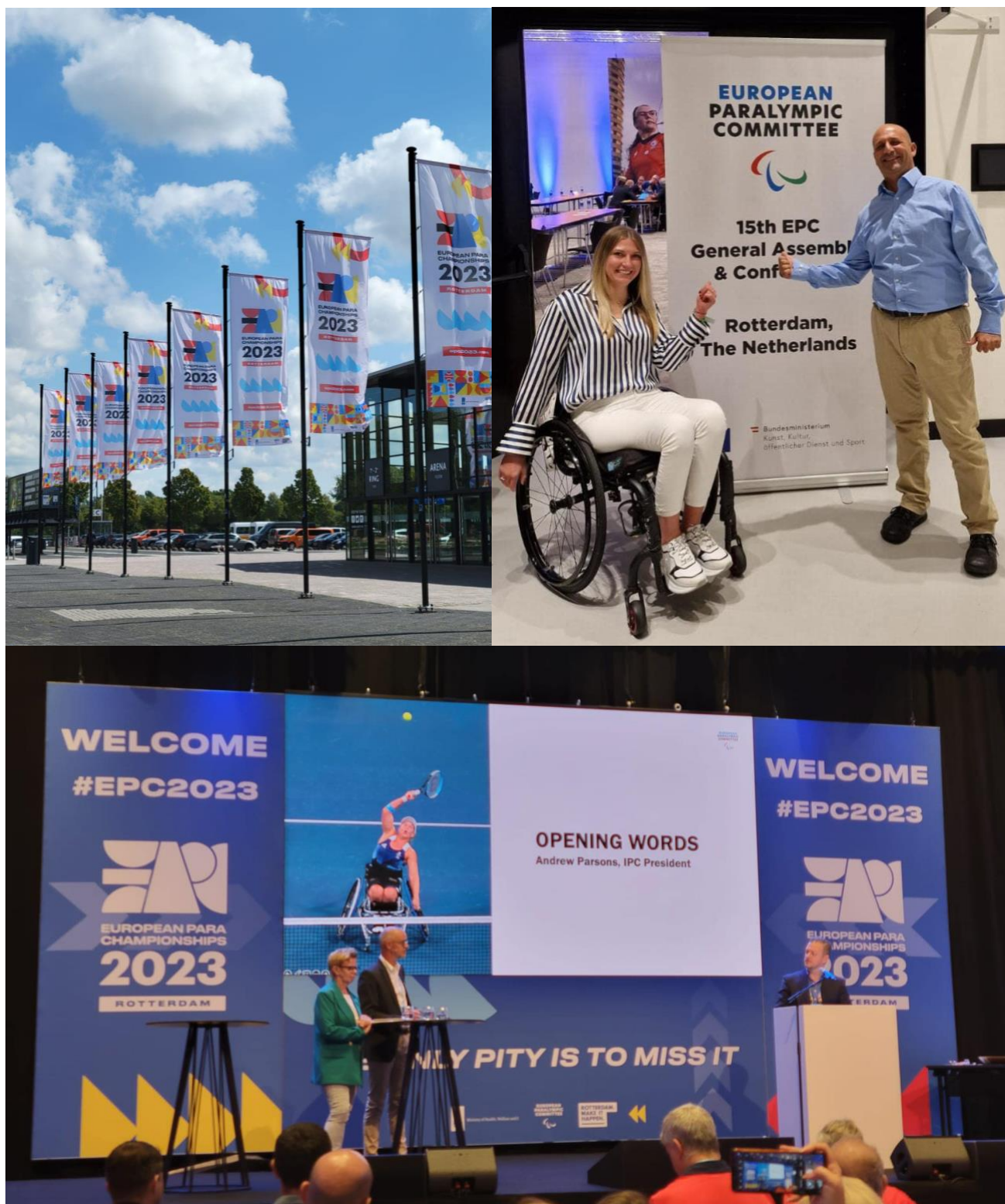
MPC was represented at the 15th European Paralympic Committee General Assembly and Conference held in Rotterdam, The Netherlands between 8th-9th August 2023. Represented by MPC Treasurer and IPC Athletes Council member Vladyslava Kravchenko PLY, the event coincided with the first-ever edition of the 2023 European Para Championships.

The EPC conference focused on the process of integration of grassroots, Paralympic and Olympic Sports, with a key takeaway being that policies on integration should carefully consider differences between equality and equity and strive to balance the complexity of all the stakeholders' interests.

The EPC Conference and General Assembly was organised against the backdrop of the 2023 European Para Championships, which left an indelible mark on the world of Para sport, with its immense reach and unprecedented digital engagement. Athletes in ten different Para Sports competed for the European titles during the inaugural edition of the multisport event in August 2023 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, with participants competing in Para Archery, Para Badminton, Boccia, Para Cycling, Goalball, Para Judo, Shooting Para Sport, Para Taekwondo, Wheelchair Basketball and Wheelchair Tennis.

It is noteworthy that the 2023 European Para Championships garnered significant international coverage with a total of 35 participating broadcast and digital media partners. These broadcasters showcased the event live, provided daily highlights, or created compelling documentaries and storytelling pieces, ensuring the event's global reach.

Through affiliated broadcasters, EPC 2023 was offered in as many as 75 countries around the world, across 4 continents (Europe, Africa, Asia & Oceania). The event also enjoyed worldwide coverage through the Olympic Channel, focusing on finals events, further solidifying its global significance.



2. EDUCATION & AWARENESS

2023 saw MPC carry out a series of educational and awareness activities, aimed at supporting the development of local Para sport through a combination of:

- *Raising awareness on Para sport and its benefits*
- *Integrating Para sport into holistic patient care (from rehabilitative to preventative care)*
- *Guiding individuals with a physical, visual or intellectual impairment (whether congenital or as a result of traumatic incidents or life-changing injuries, such as amputations or spinal cord injuries)*
- *Developing local expertise in Para sport coaching and classification*
- *Creating a collaborative network between MPC and the educational and healthcare community*
- *Performance testing and evaluation for competitive Para athletes*

Some of the initiatives pursued by the MPC include:

2.1 I'MPOSSIBLE Programme

For the third year running since the programme was first implemented by MPC in 2020, MPC continued to expand the **I'mPOSSIBLE Education Programme** over the course of the 2022/2023 academic year.

The I'mPOSSIBLE programme is the official educational programme of the global Paralympic Movement and was developed by the Agitos Foundation, the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) development arm, to spread the Paralympic values and the vision of the Paralympic Movement to young people throughout the world. Through education of inclusion and the Paralympic values, I'mPOSSIBLE aims to challenge and change the perceptions of how young people perceive people with a physical impairment, thus bringing about a more inclusive society. I'mPOSSIBLE aspires to open the eyes of young people that they can achieve seemingly impossible things through the Paralympic values: **Courage, Determination, Inspiration and Equality**.

The programme combines classroom lessons and practical Para sport activities, with a focus on four Para sports - sitting volleyball, boccia, athletics for visually impaired athletes and goalball. By Learning, Engaging and Including, Maltese students are able to experience Para sport first-hand and step into the shoes of persons with disabilities. The programme also serves as a recruitment and grassroots initiative for MPC and is an ideal opportunity for students with disabilities to get involved in Para sport. The programme is being coordinated by Ms. Rachel Cachia, Ms. Rachel Bonett and Mr. Antonello Calleja on behalf of the MPC, the latter two educators having successfully completed the I'mPOSSIBLE Educator's Course conducted by the International Paralympic Committee in 2021.



I'mPOSSIBLE

LEARN. ENGAGE. INCLUDE.

Participating schools

During the 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, MPC rounded off the year with advanced discussions and an in-principle agreement to commence programme activities at three new additional schools - **Verdala International School (Pembroke), De La Salle College (Birgu) and St. Joseph School (Sliema)**. MPC is also in discussions with other private and state schools for the possible introduction of the programme as from the 2nd term of the 2022/2023 academic year.

Programme activities

MPC collaborates with participating schools by providing teacher training sessions, adapted sports equipment, toolkits and resources, and organising presentations by local Para athletes, among other initiatives. Some of the programme activities carried out at the participating schools in 2023 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.
- 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 PLY (Para Athletics), Antonio Flores PLY (Para Athletics), Vladyslava Kravchenko PLY (Para Swimming), Bradley Zerafa (Para Darts and Wheelchair Basketball), Kurt Farrugia (Para Rowing) and Julian Bajada (Para Swimming and Para Rowing) held presentations, Q&As and practical sessions, reaching over an estimated 1,500+ students.

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 2023) and third term (April to June 2023), 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) VI Athletics (athletics for the visually impaired), Boccia and Goalball, using adapted Para sport equipment donated by the MPC and procured via the Small Initiatives Support Scheme (SIS) 2022/2023 managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector and supported by the Ministry for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisations and Consumer Rights (MIVC), under the project entitled Project Restart! (reference number SIS/45/2022).
- The participating schools also integrated Para Sport into their diversity week activities, 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.
- MPC organised staff development and continued professional development activities for various educational and other institutions throughout 2023, including with St. Monica School Gzira, the Secretariat for Catholic Education, the Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and for students enrolled with the Institute of Sport and Physical Education (IPES) at the University of Malta.



Staff development days organised under the theme I'mPOSSIBLE

- MPC also 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.
- Finally, a selection of artwork produced by students during art and craft lessons was displayed during the Para Sport Exhibition (see section 2.9 of this report for further details).



Practical sessions organised for P.E. teachers

Programme impact

During 2023, MPC has reached over 1,500+ students and educators through classroom lessons, school visits by Malta's Paralympians and Para athletes, Para themed sports days and open days. It was humbling to see schools come forward with their own ideas, with some schools even choosing I'mPOSSIBLE for their staff development days. MPC also notes the positive feedback received from P.E. teachers who participated in the practical P.E. training sessions together with P.E. teachers from other schools. This experience allowed P.E. teachers to share knowledge, develop new skills and foster collaboration amongst schools.

Overall, the programme has left a clear and tangible impact, with feedback from educators, parents, and students sharing a common trend - that the programme has enabled them to take on a fresh perspective on persons with disabilities and embracing the Paralympic values in their daily lives. It is these small steps and habits that can have a lasting and deep impact. This momentum is gaining ground, with new schools already expressing interest or taking preparatory steps to formally enrol in 2023/2024 and beyond. Looking ahead, the MPC intends on strengthening the foundations established by introducing the programme in additional primary and/or secondary schools across Malta, reflecting its strategy of up scaling the programme in a sustainable and phased approach.

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.



Practical sessions organised for students enrolled at the Institute for Sport and Physical Education (IPES)



Presentations and Q&A sessions with Maltese Para athletes



Adapted Para sport equipment procured via the Small Initiatives Support Scheme (SIS) 2022/2023 managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector and supported by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector supported by the Ministry for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisations and Consumer Rights (MIVC), under the project entitled Project Restart! (reference number SIS/45/2022).

2.2 Para Sport Impact Competition

In February 2023, Malta Paralympic Committee launched its first-ever **Para Sport Impact Competition**, inviting schools to organise activities centred around Para sport and the Paralympic values in the build-up to the Committees' 5th year anniversary since re-establishing itself in 2018.

A total of 10 schools participated in the competition up across the sports, art & crafts, and whole school event categories, with each category revolving around the over-arching theme of Para sport and the Paralympic Values.

The participating schools represented different localities across Malta and Gozo, and include a mix of independent, Church and State schools: St. Michael School (Pembroke), San Andrea School (Mgarr), St. Monica School (Gzira), St. Joseph Junior School (Sliema), Sacred Heart College Junior School (St. Julian's), St. Bishop's Conservatory School (Rabat), Laura Vicuna School (Ghasri, Gozo), Our Lady Immaculate School (Hamrun), St. Dorothy's School (Sliema), SMC Zabbar Primary School A (Zabbar). This allowed MPC to engage with an estimated 1,500+ students.



The participating schools undertook the competition activities between February to May 2023, organising sports days, open days, diversity weeks, art lessons, presentations with Maltese Para athletes and Paralympians, and various other initiatives. Further information on the competition can be found on the sub-page on MPC's official website dedicated to the Para Sport Impact Competition: <https://www.maltapara.com/schoolsparasportimpactcompetition>.



ST. MONICA SCHOOL
GZIRA



ST. MICHAEL SCHOOL
PEMBROKE



SACRED HEART SCHOOL
COLLEGE ST. JULIAN'S



SMC ZABBAR PRIMARY
SCHOOL A



ST. DOROTHY'S
SCHOOL SLIEMA



St Joseph School Sliema

ST. JOSEPH JUNIOR
SCHOOL SLIEMA



ST. BISHOP'S CONSERVATORY
VICTORIA GOZO



SAN ANDREA SCHOOL
MGARR



OUR LADY IMMACULATE
SCHOOL HAMRUN



LAURA VICUNA
SCHOOL GOZO

In September 2023, MPC announced the shortlisted finalists across the four categories:

- Para Sport Whole School Event
- Let's Create a Para Sport
- Sport is for Everyone Art
- MPC Anniversary Logo

The general public was invited to vote for the shortlisted nominees via a week-long online voting campaign organised by MPC on its social media channels in the week leading up to 22nd September. The public voting counted for 30% of the total votes, with the remaining 70% being determined by an adjudication panel of MPC representatives, including members of MPC's Athletes council. Public voting was carried out via liking, tagging and sharing the posts, thus driving engagement with the project, with an average engagement of 20,000+ individual viewers on MPC's Facebook page in the week between 15th September and 22nd September 2023.



Finalists in the Para Sport Whole School Event category

MPC is pleased to note that the Para Sport Impact Competition proved significantly successfully from various aspects, including:

- the majority of schools that participated in the project had never previously engaged with the MPC, signalling MPC’s growing presence in the educational and disability sectors.
- the creative and innovative submissions made by the schools, demonstrating the passion, energy and hard work put into to this competition.
- the attendance during the Awards Ceremony, including by the students and their parents/legal guardians
- the multiplier effect of this competition, with participating schools expressing interest in signing-up for longer-term collaborations, such as enrolling for the I’mPOSSIBLE Education Programme. This interest shows that schools are opening up to the concept of Para Sport as a mainstream topic that ought to be integrated into the school’s calendar of activities and curriculum, thus contributing to the implementation of MPC’s ethos of creating a society in which *Inclusion meets Excellence*.

The competition thus remained true to its name - **that of leaving an impact through Para Sport**. The submissions made highlight how our future generations engage positively with Para sport once they are given the opportunity to learn about Para Sport and experience it for themselves. Our students’ curiosity, open mind and eagerness to discover new things, strengthens our ambition of inspiring our communities to get active in sport, live a healthy lifestyle, and to create a society where persons of all abilities or backgrounds are able to access and practice sport.



Finalists in the Sport is for Everyone Art Category

2.3 Grassroots recruitment drive at educational institutions

As part of a targeted recruitment drive aimed at promoting and raising awareness on Para sport opportunities in Malta and introducing individuals with physical, visual or intellectual impairments to Para sport from a young age, MPC initiated a series of visits to primary, junior and secondary schools from November 2023.

During these school visits, MPC sought to:

- identify students with physical, visual or intellectual impairments (under the guidance of the school management, P.E. teachers and other support personnel) who could be introduced to Para sport
- offer 'taster' sessions in indoor Para rowing and conducting initial assessments
- pursue follow-up action by way of pairing identified students with sports clubs or coaches
- create an ongoing collaborative referral and support system between the MPC and the school

The first weeks of this grassroots initiative has yielded promising results, with three new students (ages between 5-15 years old) being introduced to Para rowing and Para swimming training sessions. MPC intends to continue its roll-out of this initiative over the remainder of the 2023/2024 academic year.

As part of this 'schools roadshow', MPC made use of indoor rowing machines and adapted seats purchased via the Small Initiatives Support Scheme (SIS) 2022/2023 managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector and supported by the Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector (MIV), under the project entitled Project NextGen (reference number SIS/08/2023). The equipment will be taken on-site to the schools, to allow the potential Para athletes to try out the equipment within the safety and comfort of the school environment, under the guidance of MPC representatives and their school P.E. teachers.

2.4 IPES Conference

MPC President Prof. Joseph Grima (in his capacity as co-supervisor alongside Dr Lara Tonna and author Mathea Saliba) co-presented the findings of the research thesis entitled ***Teaching Students with Physical Disabilities: An Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions***. The findings were presented during the conference organised by the **Institute for Physical Education & Sport (IPES)** on 25th October 2023 under the theme **Championing Change: Innovations in Physical Education and Sport**.

In brief, this paper presents the main findings from a study aimed at exploring the behaviours and experiences of Physical Education teachers teaching children with physical disabilities in Malta. In addition, the study attempted to understand the confidence levels in their abilities and what influences this level. The study was conducted through a questionnaire directed at local PE teachers from any type of school, teaching in primary or secondary level. The results suggest that PE teachers do have a positive attitude towards inclusion of children with physical disabilities during their lessons, however confidence levels in their abilities are not sufficient and they do not feel confident in performing talent identification for students with disabilities, when compared to their able-bodied students. They attribute their lack of knowledge to insufficient training.

All this highlights the need that the formal training that PE teachers receive as part of their educational and professional formation needs to be broadened to include a more extensive component aimed at imparting the required skill set to be able to feed sufficiently comfortable teaching PE to students with physical impairments.

2.5 Introduction to Para sport unit - IPES Foundations in Coaching course

For the 4th consecutive year running, representatives of MPC 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.



L-Università ta' Malta
Institute for Physical
Education & Sport

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

As part of this unit, MPC delivered a practical session using the indoor rowing and adapted equipment purchased via the Small Initiatives Support Scheme (SIS) 2022/2023 managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector and supported by the Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector (MIV), under the project entitled Project NextGen (reference number SIS/08/2023). Run by an MPC representative and supported by an indoor Para rowing coach from Siggiewi Rowing Club, this practical session allowed the student coaches to engage in a simulation of a typical functional/movement assessment carried out for Para athletes.



From a wider perspective, 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.

Within the context, in 2023 MPC put forward a formal proposal to IPES to introduce a dedicated study-unit in which participants will explore the key elements of Para sport, that is, sport for persons with a physical, visual, or intellectual impairment. The unit will aim to address this topic from three complimentary perspectives - governance, coaching and sociocultural, by combining a series of in-classroom theoretical sessions and practical coaching training sessions. Students will gain an understanding of the history, classification systems, rules of various Para sports, as well as the social, cultural, and ethical aspects of disability sports. The course will also explore the impact of Para sport on individuals and society, including the promotion of inclusivity, diversity, and empowerment. The practical sessions will allow participants to learn from local coaches and Para athletes, including practical tips on the use of adapted equipment and implementation of innovative coaching methodologies. MPC and IPES are finalising discussions for this unit to be introduced from October 2024, as part of the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games activation and legacy programme.

2.6 MCAST Sports Symposium 2023

MPC participated in the Sports Symposium organised by the Malta College for Art, Science and Technology (MCAST) between 23rd-24th February 2023, entitled ***Challenging the Status Quo: Inspiring a Legacy Beyond the 2023 Major Sports Events***. The Symposium has held in the build-up to the Games of the Small States of Europe (GSSE) hosted in Malta in May 2023.

MPC President Prof. Joseph Grima spoke alongside panellists on the discussion surrounding competitive athlete pathways and dual careers for able-bodied athletes and Para athletes.



2.7 Enhancing Physical & Rehabilitation Medicine - MRMA Symposium

In another first, NPC Malta collaborated with the **Malta Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine Association (MPRMA)** as a partner for its Symposium held on 19th May 2023 with the theme ***Enhancing Physical & Rehabilitation Medicine: Investing in our Future.***

The Symposium was attended by c. 150 professionals in the medical and healthcare professional fields, including surgeons, consultants, specialists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical bioengineers, prosthetists, pharmacists and other professionals from various public and private healthcare and medical services institutions and organisations.

During the Symposium, MPC was invited to present on the role of Para Sport as an integral part of the patient's rehabilitation, recalling how the Paralympic Games were born out of a rehabilitation hospital and how the Paralympic Movement has progressed ever since.



This allowed an excellent opportunity to educate and raise awareness amongst these key stakeholders about how Para sport has developed locally, and how MPC and such professionals can collaborate when it comes to referring and motivating patients to embark on their journey in Para sport, whether for recreational, social, physical, and mental well-being or potentially also competitive purposes.

Malta Paralympic Committee's participation at the Symposium was particularly encouraging given that this marked the first time Para sport was on the agenda of this annual symposium and reflects the fact that local professionals are gaining a better appreciation and understanding of how Para sport can be an important element of the rehabilitation process for local patients. In addition, one of our Para athletes, Mr. JeanFred Agius, presented on how he moved from undergoing intensive in-patient rehabilitation care to living a meaningful and independent life, including through Para sport.

2.8 Para Sport introductory session for in-patients at KGH rehabilitation unit

On 14th October 2023, an introductory session was organised in collaboration with Karen Grech Hospital (KGH) for in-patients being treated at the rehabilitation unit. The session was held within an outdoor space at KGH, allowing the patients to engage with us within a safe environment. Around 20 people were in attendance, including MPC representatives, Para athletes, patients, and members of the management and medical and physiotherapy or occupational therapy teams at KGH.

During the event 8 in-house patients (who suffered varying mobility impairments due to traffic accidents, workplace accidents or other events) had the opportunity to hear from five Para athletes (Maltese Para athletes Thomas Borg PLY, Nick Mercieca, Vladyslava Kravchenko PLY, Julian Bajada and international guest Ali Jawad PLY - four-time Paralympian for Team GB in Para Powerlifting, and former world record holder and silver medallist at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games) who shared their own stories and experiences as persons with a physical disability and how their journey in Para sport has helped them in all spheres of life. The common theme adopted for the event was **One Step at a Time**, aimed at passing on a positive message of encouragement to these patients to move forward in their rehabilitation process by taking it one step at a time, with the aim of (re)living their life.



The event culminated in the patients trying out the rowing machine and adapted rowing seat purchased via the Small Initiatives Support Scheme (SIS) 2022/2023 managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector and supported by the Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector (MIV), under the project entitled Project NextGen (reference number SIS/08/2023). This was very well received by the patients, who opened up and appeared to thoroughly enjoy the session and interact with Para athletes who they could aspire to. The concept is to empower these patients by moving away from a purely medical and medicine-based rehabilitation to sports-based rehabilitation programme. MPC expresses its gratitude towards Dr. Andrei Agius Anastasi, who was instrumental in organising this session for in-patients.



2.9 MPC Anniversary, Awards Night and Para Sport Exhibition

2023 marked a special moment for MPC as it celebrated its fifth-year anniversary from its formal re-establishment in 2019. As part of the five-year celebrations, MPC organised the Awards Night for the Para Sport Impact Competition and Para Sport Exhibition under the patrimony of the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malta, as summarised below:

- MPC 5th Year Anniversary:** the first part of the event formally celebrated MPC’s fifth year anniversary since its re-establishment in July 2018. Speeches were delivered by the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Hon. Dr. Anglu Farrugia), MPC President (Prof. Joseph Grima), MPC Para Athletes’ Council Chairperson and Athletes’ Representative (Maja Theuma), Minister for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector (Hon. Julia Farrugia Portelli, Hon. Dr Graham Bencini (Opposition Spokesperson for Sport) and Hon. Graziella Galea.
- Para Sport Impact Competition Awards Night:** all of the schools that participated in the Para Sport Impact Competition were each awarded a certificate of participation. The ceremony also saw the formal announcement of the winners across the respective categories, ranked by bronze, silver and gold awards. The awards were hosted by MPC Para Athletes’ Council Chairperson and Para Athletes’ Representative, Maja Theuma.
- Para Sport Exhibition Launch:** the event culminated in the official launch of the week-long exhibition under the theme *Para Sport in Malta: A Journey*. A total of 20 display panels were set-up, taking viewers on a journey from the birth of the global Paralympic Movement in the early 1960s and how this developed on the local scene. In particular, the exhibition celebrated the achievements and highlighted the projects undertaken by the MPC between 2018-2023, as well as a spotlight on Malta’s Para athletes, coaches and sports clubs. The exhibition was set-up in both English and Maltese, in line with MPC’s strategy of making use of our two official languages to ensure the widest possible target audience is met and in the spirit of accessibility.



Photo credits: Kurt Farrugia Photography

The event was attended by c. 50 people, including among others: the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, Hon. Julia Farrugia Portelli (Minister for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector), Hon. Dr Graham Bencini (Opposition Spokesperson for Sport), Hon. Graziella Galea (Opposition Spokesperson for Disability), CRPD Commissioner Rhoda Gharland, members of the precursor to MPC (the P.H.R.F.), MPC President Prof. Joseph Grima, MPC Para Athlete Representative Maja Theuma, the participating schools shortlisted as finalists, national sports federations and associations, sports clubs and coaches, Para athletes, parents, volunteers and other individuals or representatives of organisations with whom MPC has collaborated with along the years.

The anniversary celebrations, Para Sport Impact Competition Awards Night and Para Sport Exhibition was made possible thanks to the support and funding provided via the Voluntary Organisations Project Scheme (VOPS), managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector supported by the Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector (MIV), under the project entitled Project Para Sport (reference VOPS A4/05/2023).



Photo credits: Kurt Farrugia Photography

2.10 Superheroes Challenge - International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2023

In celebration of **International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2023**, Malta Paralympic Committee invited schools to participate in the **Superheroes Challenge**. This day reminds us of the Paralympic Values of courage, determination, inspiration and equality and how each one of us has the power to be a Superhero, even with the smallest of actions. With an estimated **15%** of the world's population having a disability, we reflect on every individual's fundamental human right to participate in sport and the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which guarantees the right to full and effective participation and inclusion in society on an equal basis with others.

Participating schools were required to work together, irrespective of their abilities, to achieve the following objectives:

- **Step 1 - Superheroes dress-down day:** organise a 'dress-down' day in celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities with the theme Superheroes.
- **Step 2 - Complete the sports challenge:** during the dress-down day, complete on of these sports challenges:

CHALLENGE 1 - FUN RUN	
Number of participating students	Distance
100+	2km
200+	5km
400+	10km

CHALLENGE 2 - BALL BOUNCE	
Number of participating students	Ball Bounces
100+	2,000
200+	4,000
400+	5,000

**The distance or ball bounces is the total distance or ball bounces to be completed by the school as a whole. Schools were free to decide how to divide age groups / classes and how to split up the challenge to reach the total target distance or ball bounces. The fun run can be a combination of running, jogging, team relay and should be inclusive of students with impairments (such as wheelchair users). Similarly, the ball bounces could have been done standing up or sitting down, to ensure inclusion of students with impairments.*

All participating schools were WINNERS. The aim of this Superheroes Challenge was to demonstrate to our future generations the importance of understanding that we live in a world in which we all have our own abilities, disabilities, strengths, weaknesses and challenges. By focusing on our abilities and joining forces through teamwork we are able to achieve the seemingly impossible. MPC is hopeful that this initiative instilled this mentality and positive approach amongst students, with the aspiration of creating a more inclusive society in which *Inclusion meets Excellence*.



CALLING ALL SUPERHEROES
FOR A SUPERHERO MISSION
UNITED IN ACTION
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 2023

WEAR YOUR SUPERHERO COSTUMES AND UNITE IN ORDER TO CONQUER THIS CHALLENGE BY 07/12/2023

YOUR SCHOOL MUST COMPLETE ONE OF THESE CHALLENGES:

STUDENTS >	WALK/WHEEL -OR- BALL BOUNCES	
100+	2KM	2,000
200+	5KM	4,000
400+	10KM	5,000

MALTA PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE



2.11 Bulletproof Culture Awards 2023 Finalists

Three Maltese Para athletes and inclusive sports clubs were among the finalists of the inaugural **Bulletproof Culture Awards 2023**. 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.



Photo credits: Bulletproof Culture

2.12 Ghazliet Sportivi Nazzjonali Awards

For the 4th year in a row, Para sport was once again represented in the finals of the **BeActive - SportMalta Ghazliet Sportivi Nazzjonali 63rd Edition** organised by Malta Sports Journalists Association. Congratulations to our semi-finalists and finalists, hailing from Para rowing, Para Karate and Para calisthenics:

- **Juan Farrugia** - semi-finalist, Coach of the Year
- **Nick Mercieca** - finalist, Youth Male Athlete of the Year
- **Kurt Farrugia** - finalist, Male Athlete of the Year



Photo credits: Malta Sports Journalists Association

3. PARA SPORT DEVELOPMENT AND COMPETITIONS

3.1 Para sport development - general overview

Key trends

Three high-level trends emerged in 2023 in terms of Para sport development in Malta:

- 1) **National sports associations and federations, as well as sports clubs, took on a more active/pro-active role in the development of their Para sport disciplines as part of their wider sports offering.** By way of example, entities such as Malta Powerlifting Association, Malta Sailing Federation, Aquatic Sports Association of Malta, Archery Association of Malta and Frame Football Malta all implemented initiatives and projects focused on Para sport. Whilst for some of these entities this was a continuation from previous years, for others this was the first time that they embarked with their plan and vision for developing Para sport. This trend is critical to creating a sporting and governance environment within which national sports associations and federations take on ownership and recognise their responsibility and duty towards society of opening up their sports to Para athletes. This is also key to ensuring an effective use of resources, including operational and financial resources, alleviating the overall burden on MPC.
- 2) **Sports clubs offering training sessions and local competitions in an inclusive manner, where able-bodied athletes and Para athletes participate in the same training sessions and local competitions.** At the same time, these clubs have recognised that Para athletes may need tailor-made and personalised adapted training programmes in order to reap the full benefits of the training regime. Model examples of this dual set-up is Siggiewi Rowing Club, Fgura Darts Club, La Salle Karate Club, Evolve Badminton Academy Malta, and Archery Association of Malta.
- 3) **Offering entry level competitions and recreational open days to encourage youth Para athletes and grassroots engagement.** In 2023, the Aquatic Sports Association of Malta offered young Para swimmers the opportunity to participate in a 'friendly' entry level competition at the ASA U-12 Swimming Festival, aimed at affording such swimmers their first taste of a swimming competition. Similarly, the Malta Sailing Federation organised a series of Para sailing open days over the summer months, in collaboration with sailing clubs across different locations.

Key statistics

So far as MPC is aware (either through direct awareness and contact with the Para athletes concerned, their coaches/clubs and/or their parents or legal guardians, or otherwise through the national sports associations or other stakeholders involved), the following is representative of the estimated number of active Para athletes across the indicated age groups, together with a comparison against end of 2022:

Table 1: Number of active Para athletes in 2023

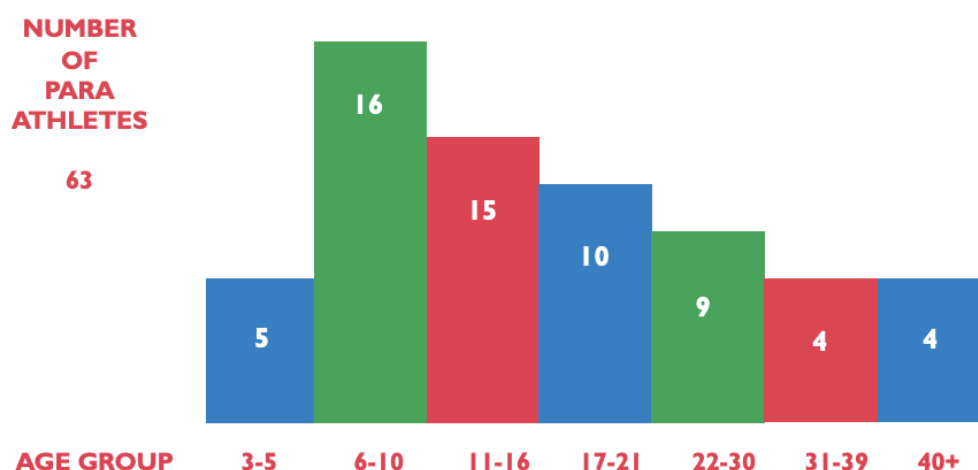


Table 2: Number of active Para athletes in 2022

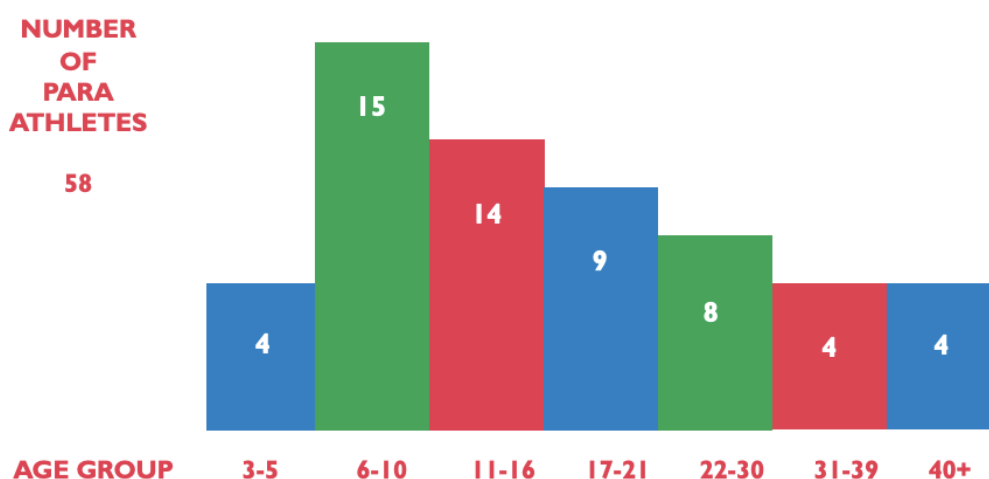
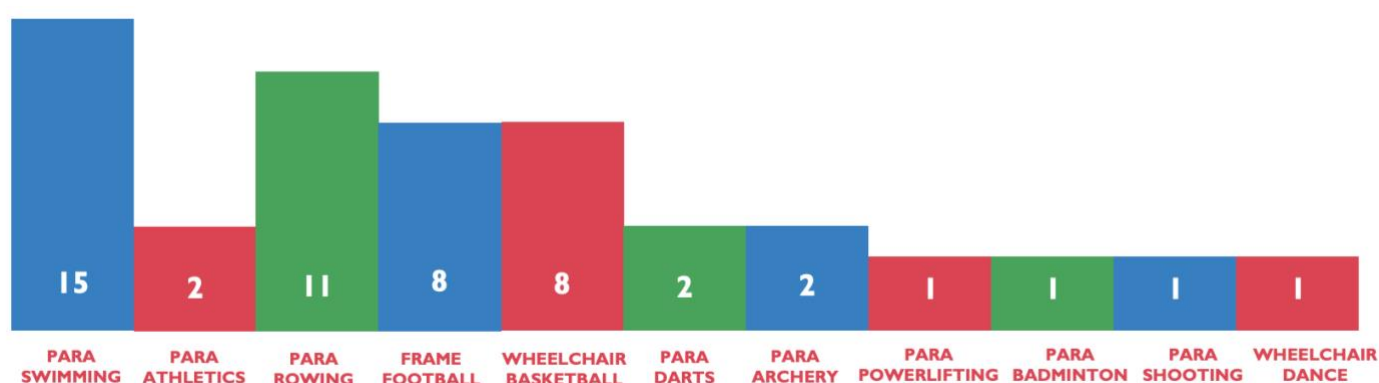



Table 3: Number of active Para athletes by Para sport in 2023



The MPC cautions that the data indicated in the tables above is based on an estimate and excludes other Para athletes (with an eligible impairment) who are active in Para sport and who may be unknown to the MPC. In addition, the figures have not been updated to reflect any movement after end of 2023. Due to lack of accurate and readily available date, Table 3 does not include number of athletes active in other sports, such as Para Karate, Para Sailing, Deaf Sports, etc.

Table 4: Development level and gender ratio

DEVELOPMENT LEVEL		GENDER RATIO	
% Beginner/1-to-1	65%	Male	Female
% Club Level	25%	77%	23%
% Competitive	10%		
NB: 1-to-1 or integrated in clubs			

Eligible impairment types

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 or visually impaired

3.2 Para sport Development - Para sport specific

Highlights

In 2023, Maltese Para athletes competed across multiple Para sport disciplines, including the national and international competitions listed below:



Para swimming

- ASA Time Trials 2023
- ASA Easter National Championships 2023
- ASA Summer National Championships 2023
- World Para Swimming World Series Berlin 2023
- World Para Swimming World Series Sheffield 2023
- World Para Swimming World Championships Manchester 2023
- Para Swimming International Training Camp, Lanzarote 2023



Para athletics

- Athletics Malta Time Trials 2023
- World Para Athletics European Gran Prix Jesolo 2023
- Malta Half-Marathon 2023



Para rowing

- European Indoor Rowing Championships Paris 2023
- Para Rowing Development Training Camp Gavirate 2023
- National Indoor Rowing Time Trials 2023
- National Indoor Rowing Championships 2023
- Establishment of Concept2 World Records



Wheelchair Para Dance Sport

- German Open Wheelchair Dance Sport Stuttgart 2023
- Dutch Para Dance Para Dance Sport International Amstelveen 2023
- Para Dance Sport XXV Polish Open Lomianki 2023



Para darts

- World Para Darts Hungary Open 2023
- World Para Darts European Denmark Open 2023
- World Para Darts Open and Classic Essex 2023
- World Para Darts World Championships Chelmsford 2023
- Malta International Para Darts Open 2023



Para archery

- Aphrodite Mediterranean Cup Cyprus 2023



Deaf sports

- European Deaf Karting Championships Slovakia 2023

Deep dive into Para sport development and competitions in 2023

In the subsequent sections below, we take a deep dive into the development activities and progress made across each Para sport discipline in 2023.

Para Swimming

World Para Swimming World Series 2023 - Sheffield and Berlin

Para Swimmer **Maja Theuma**, accompanied by **Exiles SC** coaches **Edward Caruana Dingli**, and **Tim Hartley**, represented Malta at three **World Para Swimming World Series** international competitions held in:

- Sheffield, 16-19th March 2023
- Berlin, 11th-14th May 2023

Maja Theuma participated in a total of five events in the Para swimming S6/SB6/SM6 class female category:

- 50m Backstroke
- 50m Freestyle
- 100m Freestyle
- 200m Freestyle
- 400m Freestyle

In Sheffield, Maja Theuma registered a personal best and new national record in the 200m freestyle S6 women's event, whilst maintaining swim times close to her previous personal bests in the remaining events.

In turn, in Berlin Maja achieved a new personal best time and national record in the 400m freestyle event, whilst her results in the 50m and 200m freestyle came within fractions of her personal best times. The official results are available on:

<https://results.swimming.org/disability/results/2023/bpsm/index.php>.

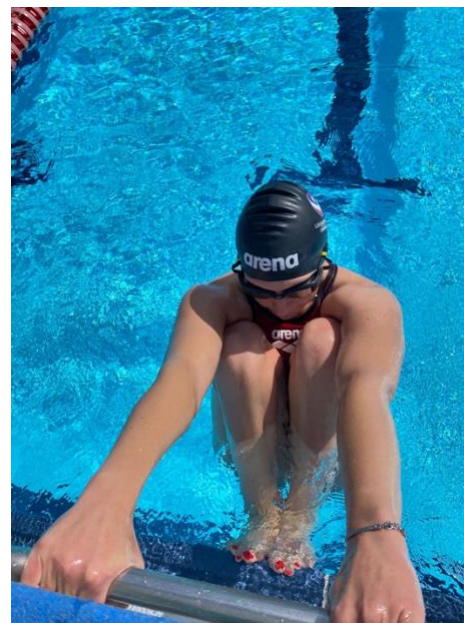
The World Para Swimming World Series held in Sheffield Italy was the third leg of the 2023 World Para Swimming World Series 2022/2023 season, with 36 countries and 300+ Para swimmers competing at the event, hosted alongside the British Swimming and British Para Swimming national championships. Similarly, the World Para Swimming World Series held in Berlin Germany was the sixth leg of the 2023 World Para Swimming World Series 2022/2023 season, with 40 countries and 350+ Para swimmers competing at the event.



These positive results demonstrate a continuing trend following Maja Theuma’s consistent results registered at the local time trials organised by the Aquatic Sports of Association of Malta (ASA) for the 2022/2023 season and her recent participation at the World Para Swimming World Series Sheffield 2023 in March 2023 and the ASA International Easter Meet in April 2023. Maja rounded off the 2023/2023 competitive season with her participation in the ASA National Championships in June.

Para Swimming international training camp 2023, Lanzarote

International Para Swimmer **Vladyslava Kravchenko**, participated in a high intensity training camp between 4th July to 19th July 2023, accompanied by Loughborough University assistant coach Ms. Katie Roberts. The training facilities selected are regularly used by international high-performance swimming squads as the facilities of choice for training camps. The training camp allowed for a structured training focused on race preparation and quality recovery ahead of the competition. The training plan comprised daily pool sessions alongside mobility and core work and was developed by Para Swimming Head Coach within the Loughborough University Swimming Programme, with whom the athlete has been training with for the past 3 years. Ms. Katie Roberts noted consistency and improvement in performance throughout the training camp, resulting in a successful training block ahead of the World Championships.



World Para Swimming World Championships 2023, Manchester

Maltese two-time Paralympian **Vladyslava Kravchenko** represented Malta at the World Para Swimming World Championships taking place at the Manchester Aquatics Centre from 31st July to 6th August 2023 in Manchester, Great Britain. Kravchenko, who trains at Loughborough University, competed in 50m S5 backstroke event and placed 16th in her category. She was accompanied by **Katie Roberts** as the team leader and coach, under the guidance of Para Swimming Lead for team Malta, **Edward Caruana Dingli** from **Exiles SC**.

Opened in 2000 ahead of hosting the XVII Commonwealth Games in 2002, the Manchester Aquatics Centre has staged numerous international events and has a proud history of hosting Para swimming events including the prestigious Paralympic World Cup from 2005 to 2010. Over 500 Para swimmers from over 60 nations are set to compete in the last Para Swimming World Championships before the Paralympic Games in Paris, France next year, marking it as an important qualification opportunity for the Games.



ASA U12 Swimming Festival

Para swimmers under the age of 12 experienced their first taste of swimming races thanks to their participation in the U12 Swimming Festival organised by the Aquatic Sports Association of Malta in April 2023.

A total of 8 Para swimmers participated in the Easter U12 ASA Swimming Festival (split across a mix of physical, visual and intellectual impairments).

It was encouraging to see the participants enjoy their first experience within a competitive environment at the Sport Malta National Pool Sports Complex, alongside local swimmers coming from various swimming clubs. This also allowed MPC and their coaches the opportunity to assess their performance and behaviour within a competitive environment and evaluate prospects of future competitive Para swimmers. MPC expresses its gratitude towards ASA for being instrumental in ensuring the participation of Para swimmers at this event and MPC looks forward to seeing Para swimmers compete at future editions.



Grassroots and youth 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 **Exiles SC** (coach **Tim Hartley** and **Edward Caruana Dingli**), **Finz Swimming Club** (coach **Nikki Muscat**), coach **Leah Satariano**, and **SouthWaves Swimming Club** (coach **Ebi Ebinaid**).

These clubs and coaches have supported upcoming Para swimmers in the youth category (from as young as 4 years to 16 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.

Para Athletics

World Para Athletics Gran Prix, Jesolo 2023

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 Jesolo, Italy, between 11th - 15th May 2023. The World Para Athletics Paris Gran Prix was the fifth stop of the 2023 World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2023. The Jesolo Gran Prix, saw no less than 250 Para athletes from 20 countries competing.

Antonio Flores competed in the T64 men's class (below the knee single-leg amputees, registering a time of 13.32s in the 100m and 26.61s in the 200m events respectively. Antonio's participation in the Jesolo Gran Prix came off the back of a series of consistent runs at the local time trials and meets organised by Athletics Malta between February - May 2023. By participating in this international competition, Antonio was enabled to compete alongside other below the knee single-leg amputees in the Para athletics T64 class category, something which is simply not possible at local/national competitions due to the absence of other below the knee amputees in athletics in Malta. Accordingly, this competition served as a useful benchmark competition for Antonio and his coach to gauge the overall progress made over the course of the 2022/2023 athletics season. The competition also served as an important step in the road to Paris 2024, with Antonio Flores vying to secure a spot in the coming months.



Malta Half-Marathon 2023

Corinne Zammit successfully completed the 21km Malta Half-Marathon, alongside volunteers and training buddies from The Volunteers of the Order of Malta. MPC commends the camaraderie and team spirit shown by the group to complete the challenge!



Para Rowing

World Rowing Indoor Rowing European Championships Paris, January 2023

Malta was represented for the first time ever in the Para rowing categories at the World Rowing European Rowing Indoor Championships held at the Stade Pierre de Coubertin in Paris, France between 26th - 29th January 2023:

Athlete	Event	Para Rowing Class	Time
Kurt Farrugia	Men – 500m	PR2	2:05.2
Kurt Farrugia	Men – 2000m	PR2	9:56.7
Julian Bajada	Men – 500m	PR3	1.46.2
Julian Bajada	Men – 2000m	PR3	7:59.5

Both athletes established personal bests and national records in the men’s 500m PR2 and 500m PR3 respectively, whilst each recording their second-best times in the 2000m PR2 and 2000m PR3 events respectively.

Their participation marked Malta’s debut at these championships in the Para rowing categories, with Kurt obtaining international classification during the competition and resulting in Malta’s first men’s PR2 classified Para rower. The athletes’ performances augurs well, considering their relatively short time in the sport at competitive level, having been guided by Siggiewi Rowing Club coach Juan Farrugia in the build-up to the championships. Overall, this proved to be an important experience for Maltese Para rowing, with the intention of competing at the next edition, hopefully with a larger contingent of Maltese Para rowers.

Historically, this competition was of significance, with Maltese able-bodied rowers and Para rowers competing at the same competition and forming part of one united national team contingent. MPC sincerely thanks team Malta athletes Emerson Farrugia and Gianni Ciappara for assisting our Para athletes during the races, including setting up the adapted fixed seat equipment for Kurt Farrugia.



The European Rowing Indoor Championships takes place every two years and was combined with the French National Indoor Rowing Championships 2023, with over 3,000 rowers and c. 100 Para rowers competing.

Further information is available on <https://worldrowing.com/event/2023-european-rowing-indoor-championships> and <http://championnats.aviron-indoor.fr/en/>.

The official results of the competition are available on: <https://regatta.time-team.nl/erich/2023/>.



Malta Indoor Rowing National Championships, November 2023

The 2023 Malta Indoor Rowing National Championships organised by Malta Rowing Association (*Għaqda Regatta Nazzjonali u Qdif Ieħor*) with the support of SportMalta saw an absolute record participation by Maltese Para rowers. A total of 9 Para rowers, across various physical, visual and intellectual impairment types, and each of whom are affiliated with Siggiewi Rowing Club, competed at the nationals:

Para rower	PR Class	Event	Time
Daniela Cachia	PR1*	2000m 500m	13:37.1 3:13.8
Nick Mercieca	PR1	2000m	13:12.8
Kurt Farrugia	PR2 (review)	2000m 500m	9:32.8 2:04.8
Owen Mallia	PR2*	1000m 500m	8:35.0 1:54.4
Thomas Borg	PR3*	1000m 500m	3:48.1 1:46.4
Julian Bajada	PR3	2000m 1000m 500m	8:04.9 3:58.9 1:49.1
Andrew Briffa	PR3 (VI)*	500m	2:37.5
Leneo Rodriguez Calleja	PR3 (VI)*	1000m	4:23.1
Isaac Borg	PR3 (ID)*	500m	1:43.8

* *not internationally classified.*

These were a championships of many firsts:

- first female Para rower to participate in the championships
- three visually impaired Para rowers (increased from one in previous year)
- personal bests
- two Para rowers ranked 3rd and 2nd in the men's open lightweight 1000m mixed able-bodied and para rowers ranking
- new world record in the PR-ID category
- 9 para rowers competed (up from previous record of 4 para rowers)



Photo credits: Kurt Farrugia Photography

Varese Training Camp and Gavirate World Rowing Regatta 2023

Para rower **Kurt Farrugia** became the first-ever Maltese Para rower to compete at an international Para Rowing Regatta sanctioned by World Rowing, marking a historic milestone in the development of Para rowing in Malta. Kurt Farrugia was accompanied by coach and boat handler **Mr. Markus Schembri**, together with team leader and co-coach/co-boat handler **Prof. Joseph N. Grima**.

The regatta was preceded by a week-long intensive training camp organised in collaboration with the SC Varese rowing club, one of the foremost rowing clubs in Italy and the home of various Olympic and Paralympic national and international rowers and coaches.

Kurt Farrugia competed in the PR2 Men's single sculls (PR2 M1x) boat class in the 2,000-meter event (gold standard event in rowing/Para rowing), achieving the following results over the 3-day 17th **Gavirate International Para Rowing Regatta** organised by World Rowing in collaboration with A.S.C. Canottieri Gavirate, the Italian national rowing federation (FIC) and the Italian Paralympic Committee:



- PR2 M1x - 2,000m (Heats) 14:41.30
- PR2 M1x - 2,000m (Heats) 17:15.02
- PR2 M1x - 2,000m (Heats) 15:30.90
- PR2 M1x - 2,000m (Final) 15:23:00

The official results are accessible on:

https://canottaggioservice.canottaggio.net/menu_reg.php?reg=23IBAD&k1=C&stagione=2023 and further information on the 17th Gavirate International Para-Rowing Regatta may be found on <http://www.canottierigavirate.it/international-pararowing-regatta/>



Photo credits: Kurt Farrugia Photography

Ahead of the regatta, the team participated in a high-intensity training camp at Lake Varese, with the technical assistance of coaches from SC Varese rowing club - Mr. Pierpaolo Frattini and Mr. Luca Vigentini. The training camp was an opportunity to focus on technique, boat rigging and setting, seat adaptations, as well as technical preparations relating to rowing technique, athlete/boat positioning, race starts and manoeuvring, safety drills and other technical aspects. The athlete trained an average of 4-5 hours per day, rowing circa 8-10km per day, followed by mobility work, recovery, and race preparation.



The training camp and regatta proved to be a fundamental learning experience for up-skilling both athlete and coaches/boat handlers, with a noticeable improvement in athlete ability and the team's technical capabilities by the end of the training camp. The training camp also enabled the team to strengthen relations with SC Varese rowing club, with a view to continuing mutual training camps in Gavirate and Malta, pursuant strategic development project for Para rowing being co-implemented by Malta Paralympic Committee and **Siggiewi Rowing Club**, Malta's first all-inclusive rowing clubs that has dedicated significant resources to Para rowing.

Key updates on on-water rowing development project funded via the Julian Bajada 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.

A total of circa **€65,000**, was raised via the challenges, for investment in purchasing a fleet of Paralympic rowing boats and related equipment, such as rowing oars, adapted seats 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

In 2023, **MPC** and its Paralympic Rowing Development Project partner **Siggiewi Rowing Club (SRC)**, undertook a number of preparatory activities, including:

Fleet of Paralympic rowing boats and related equipment

In July 2023, the Paralympic rowing boats were officially ordered from the suppliers (China based - Hangzhou Liangjin Boat Co Ltd and Hangzhou Rowing Oars Co Ltd (Z&J Paddle), comprising of:

- **6 boats** - two each of Quad, Double and Single adaptive Paralympic rowing boats.
- **ancillary equipment** - adaptive rowing seats (appropriate for wheelchair users and other athletes with mobility impairments), oars, loading trolleys, adjustable riggings, and rowing shoes.

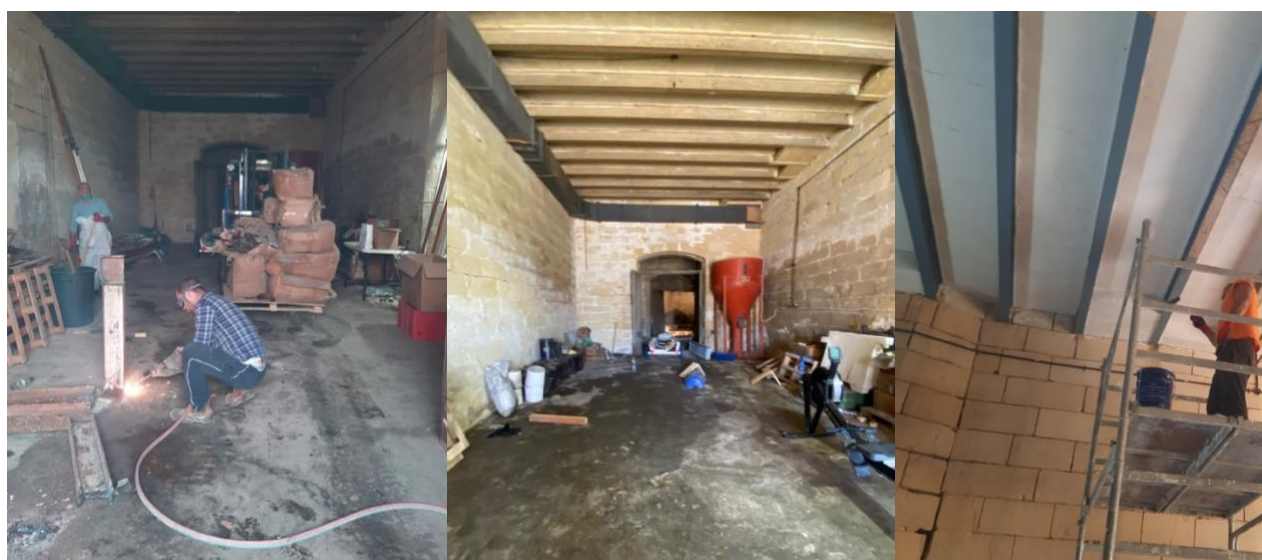




Following the official order made in July 2023, the supplier has informed Malta Paralympic Committee that the rowing boats, rowing oars and related equipment have been successfully manufactured and are now ready for collection and shipping from the Hangzhou Liangjin Boat Co Ltd manufacturing facilities in China. MPC is finalising logistics and insurance arrangements to ship over from China to Malta and the expectation is that the boats and equipment will arrive in Malta by the end of Q1 2024.

Boathouse and access to slipway

The boathouse was cleared by members of Siggiewi Rowing Club with the support of Wasteserve who provided numerous industrial skips for the safe disposal of waste which had accumulated in site. Subsequently, internal works at boathouse have progressed significantly, as can be seen below:



In addition, SRC successfully signed an agreement with Enemalta PLC to access and make use of the slipway just opposite SRC's boathouse, situated in the Marsa creek (close to Virtu Ferries Terminal). SRC is now in the process of securing the site in a manner which is acceptable to all parties concerned. The support of various Periti and individuals who are helping *pro bono* is most gratefully acknowledged.

Launch event and training programme

A launch event will be organised at the SRC boathouse (expected Q2 2024, followed by a series of events in 2024 which will be open to SRC members, the general public and sponsors, aimed at enrolling more athletes to join the rowing team and teambuilding corporate events. Malta Paralympic Committee and Siggiewi Rowing Club remain on track to start delivering a training programme for on-water Paralympic and Olympic rowing as from summer 2024, with the expectation being that teaser/testing sessions will be offered from spring 2024. In this respect, Siggiewi Rowing Club is strengthening its pool of coaches, with a team of coaches now in place across the various rowing disciplines offered by the club (indoor rowing, traditional rowing, classic (Paralympic and Olympic rowing) as well as fitness and strength & conditioning training sessions that are complimentary and essential to the sport of rowing.

Challenge Sponsors

MPC expresses its gratitude towards the incredible support of the challenge sponsors without whom our ambitious Paralympic Rowing Development Project would not be possible:

Platinum Sponsors



Gold Sponsors



Bronze Sponsors



Strength and Conditioning sessions by Paralympian Thomas Borg

MPC is pleased to report that Tokyo 2020 Paralympian Thomas Borg is now also delivering strength and conditioning and general fitness training sessions to members of Siggiewi Rowing Club. Sessions are held at the indoor gym hall at Dar Tal-Providenza, Siggiewi and is open to able-bodied athletes and Para athletes, in a fully inclusive environment. Sessions are tailor made to the individual objectives and fitness levels of participating members.

Para Powerlifting

World Para Powerlifting More Than Medals Programme and donation of equipment

In 2023, Malta Paralympic Committee benefitted from the **World Para Powerlifting (WPPO) More than Medals Programme**, in partnership with WPPO official supplier ZKC. WPPO is the international sport federation for Para Powerlifting, whilst ZKC is a Chinese based company ZKC as its new supplier of sports equipment, specialising in designing and manufacturing weightlifting and powerlifting equipment, including benches, bars, weight discs, collars and platforms.

The More than Medals Programme is aimed at supporting the development of Para Powerlifting beyond the Paralympic Games cycle, with a focus on entry and grassroots level development. In essence, it seeks to support National Paralympic Committees and National Sports Associations with the basic foundations needed to kickstart Para Powerlifting on a local level.

Through this programme, ZKC donated specialist Para Powerlifting equipment to MPC, with a total value of *circa* €2,000 and consisting of:

- 1x Para powerlifting bench
- 1x Para powerlifting bar
- 2x Para powerlifting collars
- 2x Para powerlifting disc racks
- 4x 25 kg Para powerlifting discs
- 2x 20 kg Para powerlifting discs
- 2x 15 kg Para powerlifting discs
- 2x 10 kg Para powerlifting discs



The Para Powerlifting equipment donated by ZKC via the WPPO More than Medals Programme

The Para Powerlifting equipment was installed at the indoor sports hall at Dar tal-Providenza (DTP, voluntary organisation, with registration number VO/1066 - <https://www.dartalprovidenza.org>), which provides services to persons with disabilities, including residential services to c. 150 families.

The equipment is made available for use at this sports hall following a collaboration between MPC and Siggiewi Rowing Club. This collaboration ensures that the equipment is not only located in a safe/secure premises, but in a fully accessible and open environment that is accessible to persons with mobility impairments, including wheelchair users. The equipment is made available for use to residents with a disability during the morning (under the supervision of the lead physio at DTP) and for Para athletes during the afternoons/evenings and weekends, at no cost to the Para athletes. This encourages cross-training, with Para athletes engaged in rowing following a strength and conditioning programme that incorporates Para Powerlifting.



The Para Powerlifting equipment installed at the indoor sports hall at Dal tal-Providenza, in use by Para athletes.

Collaboration with Malta Powerlifting Association and Ali Jawad PLY

Malta Paralympic Committee joined forces with **Malta Powerlifting Association** and Team GB Paralympian **Ali Jawad PLY** (4 times Paralympian with Team GB, PhD Candidate in Anti-Doping in Para Sport and Co-Founder of the Accessercise app - see <https://paralympics.org.uk/athletes/ali-jawad> and <https://paralympics.org.uk/athletes/ali-jawad>).

At a high-level, the following initial steps were undertaken in 2023:

- An in-country initial assessment was held in Malta between 11th-15th October 2023, where representatives from MPC and Ali Jawad assessed the current state of development of Para powerlifting (and Para sport more generally in Malta) and identified the immediate-to-long term goals and resources needed to achieve them.
- During the visit, Ali Jawad also conducted an intensive introductory training camp for one of our Para athletes - Nick Mercieca (male, age 17, spina bifida). Nick underwent a series of physical and behavioural assessments to gauge his potential as a competitive athlete in Para powerlifting. The 4-day training camp ended with a simulation of a Para powerlifting competition and an initial assessment report submitted by Ali Jawad, indicating the relative strengths and weaknesses of the athlete, together with a recommended plan of action for the next 6 months, following which a further in-depth assessment will be undertaken.
- Establishment of joint steering committee between MPC, Malta Powerlifting Association and Ali Jawad, entrusted with jointly developing Para Powerlifting through strategic planning and ongoing evaluation, monitoring and review of the development project.

MPC will continue to work closely with Malta Powerlifting Association and Ali Jawad over the coming months, with the immediate focus being on: (i) monitoring and supporting Nick Mercieca in his initial 6-month action plan; (ii) developing a grassroots to competitive pathway programme for local athletes, coupled with a series of recruitment and talent identification initiatives; and (iii) training local coaches and officials in Para powerlifting, including through a combination of online learning and on-site technical training camps under the guidance of Ali Jawad.



Training camp organised in October 2023, led by Paralympian Ali Jawad PLY.

Para Darts

World Para Darts Hungary Open 2023

Bradley Zerafa, Malta's current only competitive Para Darts player in the wheelchair category, competed at the **World Para Darts Hungary Open**, held in Budapest between 10th-12th March 2023. Bradley Zerafa took home the gold medal, winning the final against Hungarian David Orban Hun 4-0 in the wheelchair category final, after having won the group and semi-final stage (with a 2-1 score and 3-1 score respectively) in the lead up to the final. This result is a resounding success, particularly given Bradley's relatively short time in competitive Para darts (c. 12 months since first competing at local and national competitions in Malta).

World Para Darts Denmark Masters and Open 2023

Bradley Zerafa and Joseph Martin competed at the **World Para Darts Masters and Open** competition, held in Sogaard, Denmark, between 28th-30th April 2023.

This was the first time Malta was represented in the Para darts doubles team events, with the team making it all the way to the last 16. Bradley Zerafa also competed in the men's single Para darts open category, before bowing out in the last 16 to Denmark's Torben Sorensen with a score of 1-3. In addition, Joseph Martin made it through to the last 16 round in the Para darts men's open singles event, before being eliminated by Ralf Huesmann with a score of 3-1, as well as reaching the quarter finals in the Para darts men's masters singles event, losing out with a score of 3-1 to Michael Callaghan who eventually made the final and took gold in this event.

World Para Darts Essex Open and Classic 2023

Bradley Zerafa participated in both the individual and doubles categories at the **World Para Darts Essex Open and Classic**, in Chelmsford between 7th-10th July 2023. On the first day of the doubles, Zerafa teamed up with Vincent D'Hont and beat Jurgen Vercaemmen and Ian Lewis 3-1. In the second pairing, Zerafa joined Amar Dehar with the pair losing 3-0 against Vincent D'Hont and Jesper Anderson. On the second day, Zerafa played in the individual competition and was up against Amar Dehar, Anton Van Hamert and Darren Kennish to finish fourth overall. Finally, on the last day, Zerafa had the satisfaction of placing in the third position after taking part in a round-robin tournament where, among others, he had the player ranked in the first place, Vincent D'Hont, and Dirkske Sampers.

World Para Darts Hungarian Open and Classic 2023

Bradley Zerafa competed in the open category at the **World Para Darts Hungarian Open and Classic 2023** between 27th-29th October. Zerafa beat Pinter 3-1 in the semi-final, reaching the final against Arnost Hladky, losing 4-1. In the master category, Zerafa passed through the group stage to after beating Hungarian Zsolt Szarvas 2-0 and Attila Pinter 2-1, before losing out in the semi-final to Lajos Viragos Kis 2-1.

Malta International Darts Open 2023

Bradley Zerafa and Joseph Martin also competed in the men’s single Para darts open category. Zerafa also competed in the **Malta International Darts Open 2023**, organised by Malta Darts Association, reaching the group stages and round-robin phases in the wheelchair Para Darts open category.

World Para Darts Rankings 2023

Bradley Zerafa ended the 2023 calendar year with a top 10 position (8th position) in the World Para Darts wheelchair category, out of a total of 54 ranked players, following a consistent run of positive results over the course of 2023. Zerafa’s efforts were also recognised by the Malta Darts Association and the Fgura Local Council.

Joseph Martin ended the 2023 calendar year in 25th position in the World Para Darts standing category, out of a total of 90 ranked players.



Para Karate

Nick Mercieca becomes Malta's first black belt in Para Karate

In January 2023, Para athlete **Nick Mercieca** became Malta's first black belt in Para Karate at just 16 years of age at the time. Nick continues to grow from strength to strength, enjoying over 7 years' experience in Para Karate, as well as being active in Para rowing and Para powerlifting. MPC extends its congratulations to to Nick Mercieca and the whole team of dedicated sensei from the **Malta Karate Federation** and **La Salle Karate Club** - Joe Tanti, Joseph Mizzi and Tyler Tanti.



Para Karate demonstration at the Malta Karate National Championships

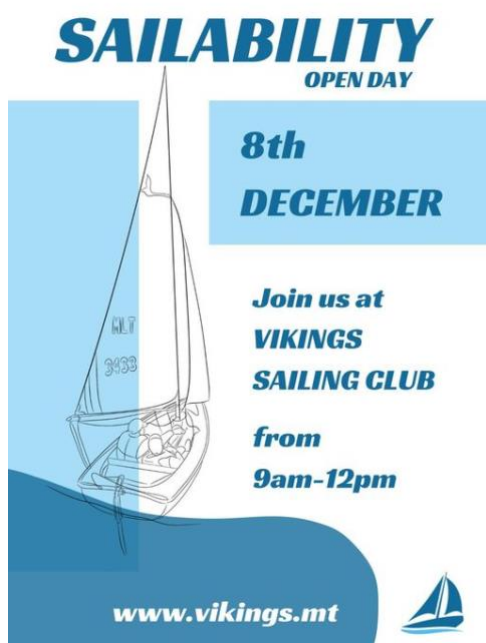
Para Karate athlete Nick Mercieca opened the Malta Karate National Championships in April 2023, with a team Kata demonstration in a fantastic show of athlete skill, strength and equality in sport.



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 in June 2022.

In 2023, Malta Sailing Federation and its affiliated sailing clubs hosted a series of open days where individuals were invited to try out Para sailing under the guidance of instructors. In addition, a grassroots initiative known as **Sailability Malta** was launched by The Malta Sailing Federation in collaboration with Yachting Malta to promote the uptake of Para sailing.



SPORT

SAILING

Yachting Malta step up drive to help persons with a disability

Yachting Malta has continued its work towards bringing inclusivity and empowerment for individuals with disabilities as could be seen in several initiatives that the body engaged with in recent months. These were directed to encourage the take up of sailing by persons with a disability.

Initiatives around Yachting Malta's sailing for all kick started in October 2023, when Yachting Malta supported the entry of Gianluca Aquilino, a parasailer for the Hansa World Championships in Palermo, Italy.

This initial spark, a dream of former Yachting Malta chairman John Huber, was further ignited in May 2022 when Yachting Malta purchased the first three Hansa 303 boats.

These boats, which eventually became four, are a World Sail-

ing recognised Class and all local sailing clubs are in possession of one. The purchase of these boats was also possible due to the contribution of Frank Salt Real Estate, Agora Foundation, and Transport Malta.

Yachting Malta's efforts towards inclusivity in the sport involve the provision of training programmes to cater to such individuals.

Joseph Muscat, a Yachting Malta team member, and keen yachtsman has been giving particular focus to this area by offering several training hours to sailing schools catering for the Hansa 303 class.

Recently, he was present for the Campionato Italiano Classe Olimpiche and Parasailing (CICO 2023) which was held at Marina Dorica in Ancona Italy.



The championships hosted over 300 athletes, of which 46 were Para athletes who raced in Hansa 303 and 2.4mR boats.

Whilst these classes were not included in the forthcoming Paralympic Games in Paris 2024, special attention is still being given to athletes competing in these classes.

In fact, 10 races were held for both single and double handed Hansa Classes, as well as the 2.4mR.

Throughout his visit, he was able to gain first-hand experience in the logistics required

for the organisation of such events.

"Our presence there was important in that we not only gained technical and organisational experience but also had the possibility to network with our counterparts from the Federazione Italiana Vela and Hansa Class delegates which will enable us to promote Malta as a centre of sailing for persons with a disability," said Muscat.

During the visit to Ancona, discussions took place with Beppe Devoti, FIV Technical Director for the National Paralympic Team, Carmelo Forestieri - President of the Hansa Class of Italy, last year's Hansa 303 Gold medalist and this year's silver medalist, Marco Gualandris, a participant in several World Paralympic Championships and CICO 2023 gold medalist.

Yachting Malta will continue to work closely with local clubs and its international counterparts in a bid to have exchange programmes between the two countries which will contribute towards the development of sailing for persons with a disability in Malta.





SAILABILITY PROJECT



Yachting Malta, in collaboration with sailing clubs, affiliated with the Malta Sailing Federation, has embarked on a Project, to promote sailing to persons with disability.



Come and learn a new skill...

For more information kindly, contact us via e-mail "projects@yachtingmalta.org" Or call 79701794







Wheelchair Dance Sport

2023 was another successful year for Malta's Wheelchair Dance Sport athlete **Steven Fenech**. Steven competed at a number of international competitions and placed on the podium on several occasions, with highlights from his performances listed below:

Amstelveen 2023 World Para Dance Sport International Competition, April 2023: Steven Fenech and Sarah Farrugia, taking home a double gold in the freestyle and show dance categories at the Amstelveen 2023 Para Dance Sport International Competition organised by Dutch Para Dance. Day two of the competition saw Steven Fenech achieve another podium finish, this time bronze in the ballroom dance category.

Lomianki Para Dance Sport XXV Polish Open, June 2023: Steven Fenech and Sarah Farrugia took home 2 gold medals once again, finishing in 1st place in both the latin and freestyle events at the Lomianki Para Dance Sport XXV Polish Open. This is the duo's second successful international competition this year, after winning gold at the Amstelveen 2023 World Para Dance Sport International Competition back in April.

German Open, August 2023: achieving 1st place in Latin and 4th place in Ballroom, in the pairs categories alongside dancer Sarah Farrugia.



Para Badminton

Malta Paralympic Committee proudly collaborated with one of Malta's foremost and fastest growing badminton academies - **Evolve Badminton Academy**. After organising an open day in April 2023, Evolve Badminton Academy started offering Para Badminton training sessions alongside sessions for able-bodied athletes, on Monday afternoons at the indoor sports complex at De La Salle College, Birgu.

MPC wishes to thank coaches **Matthew Abela** and **Melanie Grech** for leading this initiative and extending Evolve Badminton Academy's offering to include Para Badminton. This opportunity was also made possible thanks to the lending of a sports wheelchair by Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association.



EVOLVE
EST. 2021
BADMINTON ACADEMY

MALTA PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE

OPEN DAY PARA BADMINTON

2nd April, 2023
De La Salle College, Birgu
09:00 - 12:00

JOIN US!



MALTA PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE
WWW.MALTOPARA.COM

EVOLVE
EST. 2021
BADMINTON ACADEMY

Para Archery

Para Athlete **Maria Bugeja** was selected by the **Archery Association of Malta** to form part of the national team which competed at the 7th Aphrodite Mediterranean Cup 2023 organised by the Cyprus Archery Federation in October 2023. Bugeja competed both in the Para compound open division (mixed classified W2 wheelchair class and ST standing class) and in the open main division in the compounded and recurve events.



Frame Football

Frame Football Malta continued to deliver weekly training at the Sport Malta Kirkop Sports Complex, together with a series of awareness, community engagement and promotional activities in collaboration with other sports organisations and entities. In particular, FFM co-hosted an Erasmus Youth Exchange Programme in collaboration with St. Venera FC and Bologna FC, with over 50 participants engaging in two-phased exchange in Malta and Bologna, Italy respectively.



Wheelchair Basketball

Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association (MWBA) continued to offer weekly training at the Sport Malta Ta' Qali Basketball Pavilion. In 2023, MWBA also carried out activities within the community and within schools, aimed at engaging with the public, raising awareness on wheelchair basketball and aspiring to introduce new members to the sport. Initiatives included collaborations in connection with the European Region of Sports 2023, and collaborations with other basketball clubs, Frame Football Malta, schools and local councils, among others.



3.3 Sport Malta International Participation Scheme

In 2023, Malta's Para athletes were again provided with financial assistance via the **Sport Malta International Participation Scheme 2023**.

Under the scheme, Para athletes selected by MPC (either directly, or indirectly in conjunction with the relevant National Sport Association or National Sport Federation, as applicable) to represent Malta at international competitions and training camps were provided with financial assistance (on a reimbursement/refund basis only, subject to vetting and approval by Sport Malta, following submission of valid fiscal receipts, invoices, proof of payment, official results and report, together with the ancillary supporting documentation required under the scheme terms and conditions), to partially cover eligible expenses incurred (namely, flights and other travel expenses, accommodation, travel insurance, competition entry and classification costs, and other eligible expenses approved by Sport Malta). The support provided is subject to the overall grant amount allocated to MPC by Sport Malta.

The scheme terms and conditions are publicly available on the official website of Sport Malta, on <https://sportmalta.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/INTERNATIONAL-PARTICIPATION-TC-2024.pdf>

MPC expresses its gratitude to Sport Malta for the support provided under this scheme. 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.



3.4 International Paralympic Committee Athlete Support Grant

In addition, Malta's Para athletes competing at sanctioned international Para sport competitions were supported via the **International Paralympic Committee Athlete Support Grant 2023**.

To assist the development of the NPCs, the IPC operates the NPC Development Programme (NPCDP). As part of the NPCDP, the IPC has implemented the Athlete Competition Support (ACS) aimed to increase opportunities for participation of athletes worldwide at international competitions and increase representation in the Paralympic Games.

3.5 ISPORT Project - Para sport for visually impaired athletes

Collaboration between Malta Paralympic Committee and The Malta Trust Foundation

Launched in 2022, the **ISPORT Project** is a collaboration between the Malta Paralympic Committee 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 focuses 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 - VI Para swimming, VI indoor rowing, and VI judo. Blind and visually impaired athletes are 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 Siggiewi Rowing Club, Exiles SC, swimming coach Leah Satariano and judo coach Denis Braidotti.
- ***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 is 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 also engages 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.

In summary, ISPORT is a project that aims to inspire, encourage and support children and young people between the ages of 5 and 35 years, who are blind or have a visual impairment to take up sport as an integral part of their life journey.

The project is led by a joint steering committee with representatives from TMTF, MPC and other stakeholders, including an athlete representative and a parents' representative, with the aim of pooling respective expertise and experience, as well as ensuring those impacted by the project are given a voice in the decision-making and ongoing evaluation processes.

Testimonials

Mother of Athlete - Mary Rose Farrugia

"Having Samuel participate in something away from schooling was a bit of a challenge because he used to see himself as being a burden to others especially when there are physical competitions. With the introduction of the iSport project, Sam started to believe more in himself, that he is capable of achieving something even when practicing sports.

Currently he is attending the Siggiewi rowing club and also reinitiated his practice of Judo where he found a means with which to vent out his energy and the boredom of the daily hassles. The coaches and other athletes have included him as part of the team and he does not feel left out. A person is a COMPLETE individual if he/ she is treated as a 'normal' human being as much as possible and this is what the iSport projects aims to achieve – focus of the determination rather than the disability."



ISPORT PROJECT
CHANGING OUR CULTURE



ISPORT PROJECT
SPORTS = GOOD VIBES ONLY



Testimonials

Service User, Young Athlete participant - Samuel Farrugia

"The ISPORT initiative has proven to be a project built on determination and reinforced with commitment. Seeking to improve upon a long neglected field when it comes to inclusivity—the practice of sports—the project has been professionally carried from its birth in September 2022 to the point at which it stands today. Personally, knowing that the project and its members are open and sensitive to accessibility and inclusivity improvements has helped me feel more assured about the safe, effective, and enjoyable practice of these disciplines. Indeed, I believe that ISPORT is a shining example of the success that can be found if disabled people and organizations collaborate with service providers to bring accessibility into the mainstream."

A year of ISPORT - 2023 highlights

2023 was the first full year for the ISPORT Project following its initial phase in the second half of 2022. The year brought about several highlights and achievements, including:

- Enrolment of 3 new visually impaired athletes
- Regular training sessions in indoor rowing, swimming and judo
- Participation in the indoor rowing spring-time trials and the national championships
- Participation in the U12 ASA swimming festival, spring and winter editions

Looking ahead, some of the objectives for 2024 include:

- Enrolment of additional visually impaired athletes, with targeted recruitment drive
- Participation in local and international competitions and training camps
- Elevating the level of awareness on the objectives and impact of the project
- Upskilling coaches through collaboration with foreign experts in the field
- Introduction of on-water Paralympic rowing from summer 2024



ISPORT PROJECT
THRIVING BLIND - #NOLIMITS



ISPORT PROJECT
BUILDING COMMUNITIES



ISPORT PROJECT
SPORT IS A WAY OF LIFE



ISPORT PROJECT
UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL



4 SDG GOALS

MPC recognises that we all have our role to play in the realisation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 ('SDGs'). The 17 SDGs and 169 targets demonstrate the indivisibility and balance between economic, social and environment development and the priority areas that are critical for humanity and the planet.

MPC has identified the following SDGs and targets as areas in which it committed to contributing towards through its activities:

SDG Goal	SDG Target by 2030	How MPC aims to contribute to the attainment of these Goals and Targets
SDG 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increase participation in sport by persons with disabilities at all ages, to enhance immune systems, reduce dependency on medication, promote lifelong healthy living, combat depression and other mental health issues.
SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. • eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations. • build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ elevate Para sport to the national level curriculum at primary and secondary level, through the implementation of the I'mPOSSIBLE Education Programme and related initiatives. ○ delivery specialist modules / programmes on Para sport, aimed at addressing the skills gap faced by educators, physical education educators and coaches and other sports professionals who do not have the necessary skills and know-how to adopt tailor-made / personalised Para sport training programmes. ○ collaborate with national entities and authorities, sports organisations and other relevant stakeholders to ensure facilities are developed using innovative and practical inclusive practices, including for visually impaired individuals.

<p>SDG 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ continue to ensure gender representation at all levels of MPC’s governance and operational structures, including its Executive Committee, Para Athletes Council and <i>ad-hoc</i> project specific steering committees. ○ ensuring a gender balanced representation in MPC’s marketing, promotional and awareness activities.
<p>SDG 10 – Reducing inequality withing and among countries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status. • ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ support sports clubs and other sports organisations to create an inclusive sporting environment within which able-bodied athletes and Para athletes train and compete alongside one another. This model is aimed at maximising the benefits of sport for both able-bodied athletes and Para athletes. ○ work with the Maltese legislative and administrative bodies to introduce legislation and policies that will support the long-term development of Para sport, and equal access to sport.
<p>SDG 17 - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries. • encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ collaborate with sports, educational, administrative entities and other institutions, NGOs, private entities, etc. to co-design and co-implement initiatives aimed at furthering MPC’s Para sport development, educational and awareness and community engagement activities. ○ develop long-term formal relations, partnerships and sponsorships that are premised on mutual support and resource-sharing and measured by clear, achievable and measurable social impact targets.

By way of practical example on how MPC aims to attain SDG Goal 3 and 4, MPC's presence in schools is pivotal to recruiting and introducing students with disabilities to Para sport from a young age and connecting them with existing local Para athletes / Paralympians. This recruitment aspect of the programme is critical to allowing such students the opportunity to benefit from a holistic and equitable education that encompasses sports and physical activity, be it for general strength/fitness purposes, recreational or social purposes, or even competitive sport ambitions. MPC fully comprehends that students with disabilities still face obstacles and barriers to entry to full and meaningful participation in society (including in sports) and, therefore, such a programme can continue to a key enabler in creating a more inclusive society in Malta. By bringing the opportunity within their day-to-day school environment, we are able to increase our reach and tap into potential athletes who would have otherwise not have had the necessary information, guidance or support to pursue an opportunity in Para sport.

By supporting these students from a young age, we can grow the pool of local Para athletes and offer them opportunities to benefit from fully inclusive sports clubs and unlocking the potential benefits of physical, social and psychological holistic development that participating in sports can provide.

On a practical level, participation in sport can provide students with disabilities with the tools to enhance their presentational skills, foster inter-personal relations, benefit from mentoring from coaches and fellow athletes, develop lifelong skills such as time management, perseverance, commitment, dedication and the value of hard work, as well as critical thinking skills through the use of adaptive coaching techniques or the use of adaptive assistive devices according to their disability. These are all skills that are fundamental in a functioning modern workforce, where adaptability, versatility, problem solving capabilities, innovation at the workplace and use of modern/innovative technologies is key to success. For instance, a Para sport coach designing a training programme for a person with a physical or visual impairment is inevitably required to think outside the proverbial box to formulate a personalised tailor-made programme that takes into accounts the peculiarities and individual characteristics of the impairment(s) at hand, the impact of such impairment on the person's mobility and sports performance, and the objectives of such individual. This is sometimes an iterative process that necessitates ingenuity, attention to detail, patience, perseverance, and more.

This will, in turn, create a virtuous cycle of better skilled and equipped educators, students, coaches and other sports/educational stakeholders over the longer-term, with an increased participation rate of persons with disabilities within the sporting, social and cultural environment. The transformative power of Para sport should not be overlooked - we have witnessed many local Para athletes improve their lives significantly through the pursuit of dual careers in their chosen sport and profession. This potential positive impact has other wider impacts for our society and the attainment of other UN SDGs.

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 disabilities to fulfil their full potential, leaving a positive impact on society in the process.

Finally, the Malta Paralympic Committee wishes to thank the dedicated Para athletes, coaches, clubs, national sports associations, sports administrators, and other stakeholders who are fundamental in seeing our vision for Paralympic Sport in Malta come to fruition. We encourage you to join the Paralympic Movement and experience first-hand the transformative power of Para Sport.

Signed by:



Prof. Joseph N. Grima
MPC President



Dr Julian Bajada
MPC Secretary General

YEAR IN REVIEW





**MALTA
PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**



CONTACT US

WEBSITE

<https://www.paralympic.mt>

FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/MaltaParalympicCommittee/>

INSTAGRAM

[paralympics_malta](https://www.instagram.com/paralympics_malta)

EMAIL

info@paralympic.mt

POSTAL ADDRESS

Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector Volunteer Centre
181, Melita Street, Valletta
VLT 1129, Malta

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.



This project has been funded by the Small Initiatives Support Scheme (SIS) managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) supported by the Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector (MIV). This project / publication reflects the view only of the author, and the MCVS cannot be held responsible for the content or any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

