# National Fiche – Malta

## COVID-19 cases

On 13 August 2020, Malta registered 9 COVID-19 related deaths out of a population of 441,000. Malta Federation of Organisations of Persons with Disability (MFOPD) has been informed about a case of COVID-19 of a person with disabilities in a Day Centre, however no official data on COVID-19 cases or deaths of persons with disabilities and in institutions is available.

## Emergency, lockdown, and confinement

Malta declared a public health emergency through a legal notice dated 1 April 2020 with retroactive effect from 7 March until 30 June 2020[[1]](#footnote-1). The state implemented a partial lockdown, including requirements on vulnerable groups including people over 65, those suffering from specific health conditions, pregnant women and persons with certain disabilities to stay home[[2]](#footnote-2) until 3 June 2020[[3]](#footnote-3). Therapies and medical appointments were cancelled and day centres and residential homes for persons with disabilities were closed without alternative online activities. Schools were closed and distance learning has been implemented, however it was not an easy situation for students with disabilities[[4]](#footnote-4).

Agenzija Sapport, the governmental service provider for persons with disabilities, adapted its services to maintain some form of assistance for persons with disabilities and their family. As such on 16 March 2020, a service of delivery of groceries, meals and prescription medicines to assist deaf and non-verbal people living on their own was launched[[5]](#footnote-5). Agenzija Sapport’s professionals kept in regular contact through phone or skype calls with persons with disabilities and their families to make sure that they were receiving necessary support while services they usually received were suspended[[6]](#footnote-6). The service provider also delivered a series of workshop for parents of children and adults with disabilities dealing with different topics in the context of the coronavirus[[7]](#footnote-7).

## Involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities

The Maltese Government did not consult nor involved organisations of persons with disabilities in the development of national policy. The Education Department did not invite DPOs in the discussions for the re-opening of schools whereas the Maltese Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability[[8]](#footnote-8) was consulted and even played an important role in the consultation for the guidelines used for the opening of summer schools and child care centres[[9]](#footnote-9). However, a Disability Task Force has been established and chaired by the Commissioner for the Rights of Persons with Disability. The Task Force gathered the Maltese Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability committee members (MFOPD included) together with different stakeholders including representatives from Agenzija Sapport, academic professionals, DPOs (including MFOPD) and NGOs[[10]](#footnote-10). Feedback of the Task Force were taken into consideration by Agenzija Sapport and other service providers to mitigate gaps in their work during the pandemic. Additionally, the Disability Task Force communicated with government for inclusion of sign language in Press briefings of the Prime Minister and the Superintendent of Public Health[[11]](#footnote-11).

## Communications and announcement

Sign language was included in COVID-19 news event on Maltese national TV. Agenzija Sapport provided information about COVID-19 in easy-to-read and video on its website. A booklet in Maltese Sign Language and resources for children with autism are available on the website[[12]](#footnote-12).

## Institutions and closed settings

Visits in residential homes for older persons were suspended from 13 March[[13]](#footnote-13) to 18 June 2020. From 1st July 2020, services provided by the Agenzija Sapport for older persons and persons with disabilities resumed[[14]](#footnote-14). Health care professionals were swabbed prior to taking duties within the residential care facilities[[15]](#footnote-15).

## Health care

Information on potential health care related policy adopted during the pandemic and impacting persons with disabilities was not available.

## Social Protection

Persons with disabilities working in the private sector and who after 8 March 2020, could not go to work on medical advice due to the COVID-19 and could not work from home were eligible to a benefit – direct payment of €166.15 per week for those working fulltime and €103.85 per week for those working part-time. This benefit was suggested by the Disability Task Force.

In addition, their Social Security Contribution will be paid and their contributory pension rights safeguarded. Disability Assistance will continue to be received without deductions[[16]](#footnote-16).

Parents of children with disabilities over 16 years old were entitled to receive Parent’s benefit scheme if they received the Increased Severe Disability Assistance, work in the private sector and cannot telework because they have to take care of their children since adult centres and therapy sessions were closed due to the pandemic[[17]](#footnote-17).

1. Times of Malta, Coronavirus public health emergency will end on June 30, 16 June 2020, available at: <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/legal-notice-enabling-travel-to-and-from-22-countries-published.798852> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. FRA Bulletin II, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – Fundamental rights implications, Malta report, May 2020. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/mt_report_on_coronavirus_pandemic_may_2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. FRA Bulletin IV, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – Fundamental rights implications, Malta report, July 2020, p.9. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/mt_report_on_coronavirus_pandemic_july_2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Information from MFOPD, 14 August 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Agenzija Sapport, governmental agency providing services to persons with disabilities, available at: <https://sapport.gov.mt/en/Documents/CRPD%20Deaf%20assistance.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Agenzija Sapport, Press release, 3 April 2020. Available in Maltese at: https://sapport.gov.mt/en/Pres-Releases/Pages/Stqarrija-g%C4%A7all-istampa.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Agenzija Sapport, Press release, 25 April 2020, PR200755. Available in Maltese at: <https://sapport.gov.mt/en/Pres-Releases/Pages/PR200755.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The Maltese Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability is a national body, distinct from UNCRPD, acting for an inclusive Maltese society, working toward the elimination of social discrimination against persons with disability and their family and providing them with assistance and support. Additional information can be found at: https://crpd.org.mt/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Information from the Commissioner for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 31 August 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Information from MFOPD, 14 August 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Information from the Commissioner for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 31 August 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Agenzija Sapport, <https://sapport.gov.mt/en/About-Us/Pages/Informazzjoni-dwar-il-Corona-Virus.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. FRA Bulletin I, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – Fundamental rights implications, Malta report, March 2020. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/malta-report-covid-19-april-2020_en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. FRA Bulletin IV, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – Fundamental rights implications, Malta report, July 2020, p.9. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/mt_report_on_coronavirus_pandemic_july_2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Fenech MA, Vella M and Calleja N (2020) The COVID-19 Long-Term Care situation in Malta and Gozo. LTCcovid, International Long-Term Care Policy Network, CPEC-LSE, 6 June 2020, p.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Social Security, COVID-19 – Persons with disability benefit, available at: <https://crpd.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/covid-pwd-benefit-en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Information from the Maltese Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, available at: [https://crpd.org.mt/covid-19/#](https://crpd.org.mt/covid-19/) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)