

Concept Note

10 YEARS OF MALTESE SIGN LANGUAGE RECOGNITION, 20 YEARS OF THE CRPD:

Celebrating Deaf Identity, Language, and Human Rights

Thursday, 11th June 2026 – 1.15pm-2.30pm

Conference Room 6, UN HQ New York

Side-Event at the 19th Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

International Sign interpretation and Closed Captioning will be provided

Sponsor:

- Permanent Mission of the Republic of Malta to the UN in New York

Co-sponsors:

- Permanent Mission of Mongolia to the UN in New York
- World Federation of the Deaf
- International Disability Alliance
- CBM Global Disability Inclusion
- European Union of the Deaf
- Kunsill tal-Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija (KLSM – Sign Language Council of Malta)
- Deaf People Association Malta (DPAM)
- Assoċjazzjoni Interpreti tal-Lingwa Sinjali Maltija (AILSM – Association of Maltese Sign Language Interpreters)
- Aġenzija Sapport (Malta) (State Agency hosting 'Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service')

Background

Ten years from the passage of the *Maltese Sign Language Recognition Act* in 2016, we celebrate and focus on consolidating achievements, as a means of shaping the next phase of implementation of the CRPD. Malta wishes to do this in the spirit of this year's CoSP, alongside Deaf activists and allies from around the globe.

Coordinated by the Deaf-led Sign Language Council of Malta (KLSM), the side event will highlight Malta's progress in legal recognition of sign language, community-led policy development, professionalization of sign language interpreting and accessibility as a human right.

Aside from exploring the structured collaboration between local actors such as the Deaf community, interpreters and service providers, the event will also showcase best practices and

challenges through the interventions of Deaf colleagues from different countries, while collectively discussing milestones and concerns of the Deaf community regionally and globally.

Key matters explored will include:

- Recognition and status of sign language in national and international fora, including the UN
- Use of sign languages in education, services and public life
- Deaf-led efforts to lead change, and to protect language, culture and identity
- The inclusion of Deaf people in decision-making
- Accessibility as a right under the CRPD and national legislation

A particular focus on how small nations can lead change will be included, whereby Malta can serve as a model for other small states on how to successfully integrate a minority sign language into everyday life, by including Deaf people, respecting linguistic rights, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Core Objectives for the Side Event:

- Share the "Malta Model": How the local Deaf community, as active decision-makers in matters affecting them, work together with service providers and professionals as a team, to protect sign language, accessibility and participation rights.
- Share experiences of professional regulation: Discussing national experiences, including Malta's *Registration and Warranting of Sign Language Interpreters Act*, identified as a model of good practice by WFD, EUD, EFSLI (European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters) and WASLI (World Association of Sign Language Interpreters), for regulating registration, training, education and other requirements for sign language interpreters.
- Show Deaf Leadership: Showcase best practices in respect of the Deaf community actively leading policy-making processes at national, regional and international levels.
- Encourage National and International Action: Encourage other States Parties, regional bodies and the UN to adopt similar legislative and practical frameworks that empower Deaf people.

To mark the tenth anniversary of LSM becoming an official language, Maltese representatives will also take this opportunity to present the beauty and syntax of LSM as a living language, with its own structure, history, and cultural value. A language which is an integral part of Malta's cultural diversity.