

Għaqda Persuni Neqsin mis-Smigh

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Minutes of the AGM held on 7/12/2022 at 7pm at The Meeting Place

1. WELCOME & ROLL CALL

- a. A small introduction was given by Vice President Emma Ripard Xuereb (ERX) who explained that President Annabelle Xerri (AX) is running a bit late as she is currently accepting an award on behalf of Deaf People Association Malta.
- b. ERX thanked all the members for attending the AGM and explained the agenda.
- c. A note was taken of all attendants present. 21 people were present, 5 of whom were committee members, 2 of whom were non-members, and also 2 sign language interpreters Ms Maris Bonnici & Ms Rita Portelli, who interpreted the AGM.

2. MINUTES

- a. The minutes of the 2021 AGM were sent via email to all members. The full minutes and a short video summary of the minutes were also published on the website. The summary video was shown to all the members present.
- b. No questions were asked
- c. The minutes were approved by 16 people and only 1 abstained.

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Member Dorianne Callus proposed that when minutes are sent via email, the committee members could post on social media to inform members that the minutes were submitted.

3. DEAF YOUTH ASSOCIATION MALTA

- a. A short presentation was given by DYAM.
- b. Melissa Aquilina (MA) gave an introduction and presented the Agenda.
- c. Joann Spiteri (JS) gave a small introduction about DYAM via video and explained that she is not present as she is abroad in Denmark following a course on Deaf studies. She told those present to feel free to ask any questions about DYAM, and that the other sub-committee members of DYAM, namely LRX and MA, would be happy to answer any of their questions.
- d. MA presented the activities held by DYAM during 2021. These included:
 - i. A video was created and provided to Agenzija Zghazagh (AZ) to celebrate the International Day of Sign Languages, which was promoted on the AZ social media platforms.
 - ii. A halloween movie night was held in October 2021 at The Meeting Place
 - iii. DYAM participated in an Erasmus+ Project which focused on diving in September 2021.
 - iv. A Deaf Awareness session was held with Karl Vella Foundation

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- v. JS and LRX participated in the EUDY GA online as delegates from Malta.
 - vi. MA explained that LRX joined the subcommittee of DYAM during 2021.
 - vii. MA explained that they also organised an Instagram Takeover
 - viii. MA informed those present of the dates when meetings were held by DYAM.
- e. Loran Ripard Xuereb (LRX) presented the upcoming activities that DYAM will be organising in 2023. During 2023, activities will be held in Malta and abroad. International activities that DYAM aim to participate in during 2023 (if Deaf youth are interested) include:
- i. EUDY Junior camp in Austria (13 - 17 years old) from 22nd to 29th July. A leader (aged 18 to 35 year old) will be joining any interested participants.
 - ii. EUDY Youth Camp & GA in Portugal (18 - 30 years old) from 7th to 17th August
 - iii. WFDYS Youth Camp in Jeju South Korea (18 - 30 years old) from 2nd to 8th July 2023
For the above 3 activities, participants have to pay for flights, accommodation, food etc as these are not free (unless sponsors are found).
 - iv. World Deaf Camp (JASPEL) in Slovakia from 1st to 8th July (for Deaf and CODA who know sign language). A leader will accompany the participants. The cost is EUR350.

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Member Keith Callus asked if CODA could participate in the first 3 international projects. LRX explained that CODA could only participate in the 4th project and that the leader would be a Deaf person. ERX also explained that projects by EUDY and WFDY are organised by Deaf youth for Deaf youth and not for CODA.

4. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2021

- a. The financial accounts were presented by Gianmarco Santirocco (GS) who explained that 2021 was a record year.
- b. Highlight points:
 - i. The Income in 2021 grew for the 3rd year in a row to the record figure of 133,101€, up 121% from 60,251€ of the previous year (2020) ;
 - ii. The Association achieved another record surplus of 93,263€ compared to 25,401€ in the year 2020 and ;

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- iii. The inheritance left by Mr. and Ms. Doe from the UK/Malta and the three Erasmus+ grants are the main contributors to these positive results.
- iv. As at 31 December 2021, total assets amounted to 146,606€ from 53,342€ in 2020 represented by Accumulated Fund 100% in liquidity.

c. Facts:

| | 2021 | 2020 |
|--|-----------------|----------|
| Income | 133,102 | 60,250 |
| Expenditure | (39,838) | (34,849) |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for the year | 93,263 | 25,401 |
| Accumulated Fund at 1st January | 53,342 | 27,941 |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for the year | 93,263 | 25,401 |
| Accumulated Fund at 31 December | 146,606 | 53,342 |

Results of 2020 show positive results, and in 2021 the Association had even better results. In summary, as at 1st January 2021, the Association had €53,342. During 2021, the surplus was that of €93,263 (€133,102 income - €39,838 expenditure = €93,263 surplus), ending the year with an accumulated fund of €146,606.

d. Income:

| | 2021 | 2020 |
|--|----------------|--------|
| Erasmus Projects Grants | 51,876 | 58,312 |
| Membership, Donations and Sales | 1,171 | 1,885 |
| Interest Income | 39 | 53 |
| Other Revenue | 80,015 | 0 |
| Total Income | 133,102 | 60,251 |

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In 2021, the Association received a bit less income than 2020 from the Erasmus Projects, due to one of the projects. Gianmarco said that the Association hopes this income from the Erasmus Projects would be similar during 2022. Income from membership, donations and sales, as well as income from interests were also a bit less than those received in 2020. Gianmarco explained that we need to start being more cautious as the cost of living is increasing. The largest income that the Association received was that of €80,015 received from the will of Ms Gillian Doe. Gianmarco explained that hopefully the Association should receive more income from this will, when more property is sold. The income made from the property sold will be shared between the Association and two other Associations in the UK.

e. Expenditure:

| | 2021 | 2020 |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Small Equipment | 395 | 0 |
| Subscriptions, Fees & Conferences | 2,235 | 332 |
| General and Office Expenses | 1,187 | 6,465 |
| Refreshments and Catering | 1,610 | 0 |
| Travel - International | 2221 | 291 |
| Wages, Consulting and Professional Fees | 32,049 | 27,605 |
| Bank Fees, Tax and Duties | 57 | 58 |
| TOTAL | 39,754 | 34,751 |

Gianmarco explained that the Association's largest expenditure was on his wage as the Association's project manager, and on payments to Deaf persons for the work they delivered on projects (casual wage). Some expenses, such as refreshment and catering, travel expenses, as well as membership fees (WFD & EUD), were paid from the projects.

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f. Balance Sheet:

| | 2021 | 2020 |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Assets | Euro | Euro |
| Inventories of Batteries and Alarm Clocks | 362 | 445 |
| Cash at bank and in hand | 212,961 | 82,726 |
| Cash at bank and in hand | 212,961 | 82,726 |
| Liabilities | 107,206 | 107,206 |
| Grant Prepayments | 193,564 | 154,372 |
| Net Assets | 143,606 | 53,342 |

Gianmarco explained that we need to be careful how to invest the money that the Association has, so that we don't lose it. He reminded the members that so far, the Association does not have any premises. The Meeting Place is a good place for the Association to organize activities, meetings, and for members to socialize. However, the venue's address cannot be used as the Association's legal or postal address. Moreover, if The Meeting Place stops functioning, the Association will not have a venue for its members to meet. Gianmarco suggested that it would be a good idea to start thinking about investing the money that the Association has in a property / an office for the Association.

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Member Keith Callus thanked Gianmarco for his valuable work. He said that perhaps the Association can save some money in a fixed account as a safety net, where the Association can keep saving funds so that perhaps in the future it can purchase premises for Deaf Club. Gianmarco explained that at the moment, APS is possibly the best choice as a bank in Malta, where the Association has an account and we receive 2%. The Association also has an account at HSBC with a small amount of money for which we receive 0.5%. Cost of living has increased by 10% so unfortunately funds will be lost. It would only make sense to start planning to invest in premises and have a Deaf Club which is accessible and which will remain the property of the Deaf Association. When cost of living increases, funds are not lost when invested in premises (a member commented and said that premises would become more expensive / more valuable).

Member Dorianne Callus stressed how important it is to find premises which are not only accessible but also in a central location, for example a location where one can arrive using one bus, hence easier to reach. Gianmarco said if a premises is not accessible, it can be made accessible by installing a lift or a ramp.

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LRX asked the members to keep questions about the purchasing of new premises / Deaf Club for later, and explained there will be time for such questions later on.

The Financial Accounts were approved by all members.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT FOR 2021

The Administrative Report for 2021 was presented by Emma Ripard Xuereb. She gave a run down of the Activities that were organized in 2021, and started by explaining that from January to June 2021, it was a very difficult time when everything had to be done online, interpreters worked on TV to interpret information about new legislation, mask wearing, etc, although they were not always booked, hence the committee had to chase authorities to book interpreters, the media had to be informed about the dimensions of the interpreters' box on TV, and so on. The following activities took place online or face-to-face:

- a. Meeting with Hon. Julia Farrugia Portelli - AX and ERX (February)
- b. EUD EGA - LRX (February)
- c. Disability Rights Strategy - Commissioner Helena Dalli - AX and Dorianne Callus (February)
- d. World Hearing Day - George Vella, Dorianne Callus, Karl Borg (March)
- e. COVID-19 Vaccine to Deaf clients of Agenzija Sapport priority (April)
- f. Deaf awareness girl guides Cospicua - Melissa (April)
- g. MA Disability Studies students meeting online with Disability Stakeholders - AX (May)
- h. Meeting online with Ms Ruth Sciberras CEO Agenzija Sapport - AX (May)
- i. Meeting online with WFD - Gianmarco, Joann, (June)
- j. Deaf Club opened again (July)
- k. Meeting in person with Dr Joseph Murray WFD President (July)~
- l. EUD GA online - LRX (August)
- m. EUDY GA online - LRX & JS (September)
- n. Diving Project - JS and Melissa Aquilina (September)
- o. Deaf awareness St Dorothy's school - ERX (October)
- p. Deaf awareness girl guides Cospicua - JS (October)
- q. Presentation about Frontrunners LRX (October)
- r. Theatre with interpreter and some Deaf people (October)
- s. AGM 2021 (November)
- t. Banoffee in Spain - ERX (November)
- u. Deaf Weekend 2021 (November)
 - i. Pizza Night
 - ii. Dinner at Waterfront
 - iii. Picnic Ta' Qali
- v. Graduation party for sign language interpreters (December)~

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- w. International Day of Persons with Disabilities CRPD Seminar - JS (December)
- x. Bingo Night (December)
- y. Board meetings: 20th January 2021, 23rd February 2021, 6th April 2021, 31st May 2021, 29th July 2021, 30th August 2021, 7th October 2021, and 23rd November 2021.

The Administrative Report was approved by all members.

6. OTHER MATTERS

Deaf Club New Premises

AX explained that due to recent profits, the Association has managed to save money and would like to invest in premises. Purchasing and owning a premises would mean that the Association would have an office, as well as its own address instead of a PO Box. The premises can be used also as a studio to create videos. Many videos need to be created due to the committee's work and projects, hence having a studio would be ideal, rather than creating content at the committee's personal home. Video material, such as lights and background, can be set up and kept handy at the studio, so that professional videos can be created easily. Finally, having its own Deaf Club would mean that the Association has a place where to store its goods, such as material from the older generations and from previous committees, material that go back to when the Association was established. At the moment, the storage is kept at the committee's personal home, and although it is safe, it is not feasible.

AX explained that if the members agree, the committee can start looking at properties. The committee would call an EGM should it find adequate premises, and will not purchase property before obtaining approval from members. The committee has yet to see what would be the most suitable property, whether to find an office + studio + storage only, or whether to find a bigger property to have additional space for social activities. Another idea would be to purchase an even bigger property that would have space for a small apartment that can be rented, perhaps to Deaf tourists. The rent would be profit for the Association. This all depends on the property prices.

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Member Alexia Petrou said that ideally the new premises would have an office as well as space for socializing, so that we do not have to worry if The Meeting Place closes down. AX reminded the members that if we stop using TMP and start using Deaf Club, the Association would be responsible to have someone to upkeep Deaf Club (maintenance, cleaning, running, etc).

Member Dorianne Callus asked whether the Association would be allowed to continue using TMP if the government becomes aware that the Association has new premises. AX explained that if the Association has premises that can accommodate its needs, it is most likely that the government would not continue letting the

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Association use TMP. Gianmarco said that some Associations have an office but can meet at TMP to organise social events. AX explained that when the Association applied to start using TMP, eligibility criteria included Associations / NGOs that cater for their members' health and wellbeing, that organize social activities for their members, and that do not have premises to do so. Only approx 40 NGOs were selected at the time, and the Association was very lucky to have been one of them. Member Keith Callus suggested purchasing land, so that the property can be built slowly according to the funds allocated, i.e. start with the ground floor, continue saving and then build a first floor, etc. AX said this was a superb idea, but the challenge would be finding the time to take over the responsibility to handle such a big project, i.e. calling builders, workers, organising, etc. Keith suggested a turnkey to handle all the work. AX reminded the members that although it is a fantastic idea, the committee works voluntarily and would not have the time to handle all the work that comes with building a new property. Keith explained how in Ireland, the Deaf Association purchased a land and built an underground garage, which had space on different floors for gym, restaurant, rental apartment, Deaf office, etc and is now making a profit from these. He asked the Association to check whether there is a government scheme that would support the purchase of land. Member Julian said that studio apartments can be rented to any interested tourists and not just to Deaf tourists, as Deaf tourists may not visit Malta all year round. This way, no rent is lost.

All members agreed that the committee can start looking at properties.

New Staff at Deaf People Association Malta

AX informed the members that from September to October 2021, ERX was employed by the Association on a part time basis. She explained that her wage was paid by funds from the projects and from jobs plus. However, it was noted that if she was employed by the Association, she cannot stay as a committee member due to conflict of interest. ERX chose to stay as a committee member.

AX reminded the members that Gianmarco Santirocco works full time as a project manager with the Association, with a contract of 3 years, from October 2019 to October 2022. His wage was paid by funds from the Banoffee project. Due to the funds that the Association has, the committee extended his contract further for 6 months, in order to help writing and submitting new projects and to help with the association's accounts. This in the hope that the Association continues to grow and continues to make more profit. AX clarified that when Gianmarco writes projects for the Association, many times with ideas that Deaf persons come up with, these projects are checked by the committee to ensure that information about Deaf culture and sign language is correct. Gianmarco also handles all the paperwork and administration that comes with writing and submitting new projects. The workload has increased over the months, and the committee is unable to help Gianmarco carry out

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the administrative work as all committee members are volunteers. Therefore the Association employed Riccardo Morganti to help with the workload. His wage is paid partly by Jobs Plus and partly by the money received from the projects. AX clarified that the Deaf members are unable to do the work of Gianmarco and Riccardo, and that although they are both hearing, the committee ensures that their work is checked.

7. OUR PROJECTS

Sarah Bezzina Wettinger presented the projects that the Association worked on during 2021.

- a. PANCAKE - This project started in 2021 with Friends of the Earth Malta. The word 'pancake' stands for Plants And Nature Conveying Augmented Knowledge for Everyone. This project is similar to Banoffee. The aim of this project is to create signs about plants and nature. Malta's Deaf participant in this project is LRX. SBW explained the Association is aware that there may not be the need to create such signs, that the topic may not be of much interest to the Deaf community. She continued to explain that however, this project is useful for the Association in order to continue making surplus.
- b. SIGN TEACH ONLINE - Another new project that started in 2021. Malta's Deaf participants in this project are LRX, ERX, JS, and Dorianne Callus. This project focuses on learning new skills on how to teach sign language online.
- c. BANOFFEE - This project continued during 2021. Malta's participants in this project were SBW and ERX. ERX went to Spain in November 2021 as part of the project.
- d. SIGN LINKS - This project continued in 2021 and focuses on Deaf Role Models. Malta's participants are AX and SBW.

SBW told the members that if they have any ideas, they are most welcome to discuss them with the committee, so that these ideas can be applied into a new project. SBW thanked Gianmarco and Riccardo for their valuable help and contribution with these projects. SBW explained that these projects are important for the Association to continue making surplus and growing. She told the members that they are also welcome to participate in the projects and reminded them that they would be paid for the work that they do in the projects. Moreover, participation in the project, including flights, accommodation, food, etc is paid by the project.

8. ELECTION FOR NEW COMMITTEE 2022 - 2024

- a. A message from Joann Spiteri, who will be resigning from the committee. She told the members that it was a positive experience where she learned a lot. She also said that if anyone wanted to contact her, they are free to do so. JS

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thanked the committee for their support and that the committee will forever have a special place in her heart. She wished the candidates good luck with the election.

- b. AX introduced the election candidates and a short bio of each candidate was shown on the videos to the members. The candidates are:
 - i. Nicole Bartolo
 - ii. Annabelle Xerri
 - iii. Sarah Bezzina Wettinger
 - iv. Emma Ripard Xuereb
 - v. David Xuereb
 - vi. Loran Ripard Xuereb
- c. LRX explained to members how they can vote for the candidates. Gianmarco and Riccardo counted the votes.
- d. Election Results:
 - i. Annabelle = 18
 - ii. Sarah = 15
 - iii. Emma = 13
 - iv. David = 10
 - v. Nicole = 12
 - vi. Loran = 18
- e. AX informed members that due to the statute, David Xuereb will have to take over Nicole Bartolo, as the statute (clause 8d) states that:

“The first five persons who obtain the highest number of votes will be declared elected. If more than one person among these five persons is a hearing person, the first four deaf persons are elected together with the hearing person with the highest number of votes..”.

It was explained that the election still needed to take place so that the committee members would find it easier to establish roles for the committee members, depending on the votes obtained. Therefore the elected new committee for 2022 - 2024 were confirmed as follows:

 - Annabelle Xerri
 - Loran Ripard Xuereb
 - Sarah Bezzina Wettinger
 - Emma Ripard Xuereb
 - David Xuereb

AX told the members that the aim of the statute was that different Deaf persons were members of the committee as much as possible, in order to give more power to Deaf persons on matters that concern them. AX explained that it is actually a dream for the Association that the committee would someday be made up of 5 Deaf members. AX told Nicole that she is still very welcome to work with the committee and to participate in the Association's activities and projects. AX told Nicole that she is still a valuable member. LRX

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told Nicole that she can still try again and participate in the committee elections in 2 years' time. AX also said that if a committee member resigns, Nicole can replace the member.

9. CONCLUSION

AX concluded the AGM by thanking all the committee members for their hard work and dedication throughout the past 2 years, and she thanked them for trusting her to be take on the role of President. She explained that it was a difficult time, especially due to Covid and due to personal matters, but it was a successful term thanks to the amazing team. AX thanked JS for her valuable work with the committee, she explained that JS has come a long way from when she started, and her contribution to the committee along the years became priceless. The committee is said to see her go but wished her luck on her journey. AX thanked Gianmarco and Riccardo for their hard work and support, as they helped the Association grow. AX thanked the members for trusting the committee and told them that the committee wants to continue supporting them and working with them. She hopes to see more Deaf members return as members and friends of the Association. AX told the members that the committee needs their help in order for the Deaf community to continue growing by promoting peace and friendship with each other. Special thanks also to the sign language interpreters.