

Għaqda Persuni Neqsin mis-Smigh

University of Malta
P.O. Box 16
Tal-Qroqq
Msida, MSD2080
Malta

Email: info@deafmalta.com
Website: www.deafmalta.com



Minutes of the meeting held on 12th November 2021 at 7:45pm at The Meeting Place

1. Welcome

A short welcome was given by President Annabelle Xerri. AX explained that questions can be asked after each presentation.

A note was taken of all attendants present. 15 members were present, 5 of whom were committee members.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the 2020 AGM were sent via email to all members.

Member Karl Borg was present and suggested that the minutes of each year's AGM should be summarized into easy points. In addition, Dorianne Callus suggested creating a link with a video in LSM of the minutes to make them more accessible to the Deaf Community.

AX provided a summary of the minutes of 2020's AGM in LSM.

Minutes of 2020 AGM were approved.

3. Deaf Sports Association

The AGM started with a presentation delivered by George Vella and Karl Borg on behalf of Deaf Sports Association, which is a sub-committee of DPAM. GV introduced Maltese Deaf Athletics as follows:

- Steven Mulvaney & Elvin Bugeja - Karting
- Karl Borg - Ghawm fit-tul
- Melissa Aquilina - Ghawm
- Julian Zahra - Hockey

- Peter Dimech - Golf
- Doreen Ellul - Atletika (giri fit-triq)
- Gabriel Melillo - Waterpolo
- George Vella - Atletika (giri fit-triq u tracks)

Karl Borg informed the attendees that Deaf Sports Association had local and international activities during 2020, such as local meetings with Malta Paralympic Committee, participation abroad in Deaf Karting, as well as participation in World Deaf Athletics Championships. He also applauded GV who was finally recognized after 16 years for his national record as a Deaf athlete.

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Member Keith Callus had a query for Deaf Sports Association. He spoke with Steven Mulvaney and was told that the racing track at Ta' Qali closed due to COVID19. The track did not open again, therefore Steven and Elvin Bugeja were unable to practice karting. Keith said that although there was another racing track at Hal Far, those training needed to have their own automobile. He asked Deaf Sports Association whether there was a solution for this. George Vella replied that he and Karl Borg were preparing to discuss this issue with the Maltese Sports Council, proposing that a location be opened to enable people to have the opportunity to train and practice this sport.

4. Deaf Youth Association (DYAM)

The presentation started with a video by Melissa Aquilina who is a member of DYAM and who was unable to attend the AGM in person. The members of DYAM Melissa Aquilina and Joann Spiteri gave a short introduction about themselves. They explained that the new logo of DYAM represented different deaf youth and unity between them. The subcommittee started on 14th November 2020. JS explained DYAM's vision, mission, and values:

- Vision: To promote an inclusive community for Deaf youth
- Mission: Empowering young Deaf people, Promoting a positive Deaf identity, Providing Deaf youth with new opportunities
- Values: Respect, Positivity, Commitment

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Member Keith Callus expressed that the young Deaf community is declining, even though there are sign language interpreters. He asked what can be done by the

subcommittee to encourage more Deaf youth to become members of the Deaf community. Board member JS replied that it is not easy as at the moment there are only 2 Deaf youth in the subcommittee who have to do all the work voluntarily and come up with ideas on their own. However, the aim of the subcommittee is to try and increase the number of Deaf children and youth in the Deaf community. She said that this cannot be done immediately but slowly, and that is why DYAM was set up. In addition, JS said that in Malta, professionals and parents of deaf children believe that the focus should be on spoken and written languages not on sign language. JS also said that DYAM tries to encourage parents - who are contacted by interpreters - to bring children to Deaf youth activities, however, they never attend.

Member Matthew Pace said that Malta and abroad are different, however, it's very easy for the Deaf community in Malta to cease existing due to its small size. In Malta, the Deaf youth sub committee is voluntary, and he asked whether the Deaf Youth Associations abroad are voluntary as well. JS replied that abroad, there are paid and also voluntary Deaf Youth Organisations, such as EUDY which has a voluntary board but which also has paid staff.

Member Karl Borg joked that he wanted a medicine that makes him younger again! On a more serious note, Karl said that unfortunately nowadays the professionals insist that deaf children are fitted with cochlear implants while focusing on speech therapy only, whereas sign language is not recommended. He said that this is one of the problems that is leading to a decline in the Deaf Community. Karl asked whether it would be possible to include younger ages in the age bracket of DYAM, ie 0 years - 35 years rather than 13 years - 35 years. Younger deaf children can have their parents consent / parents driving them to the activities, as they would with after-school activities. Karl also said that DYAM should contact not just the deaf children / youth, but also their parents, to encourage them to participate.

Board Member JS replied and said that she agreed that nowadays the focus is on speech and cochlear implants only, whereas sign language is not given importance for deaf children. She also agreed that younger children should be included from as young as babies in the age bracket of DYAM. JS explained that information is given to the interpreters who would then submit the information to the parents, as DYAM cannot obtain the parents' contact details due to data protection.

Member Alexia Petrou asked whether the interpreters really do submit the information about activities to the parents, and JS replied that the interpreters definitely submit the information and the problem remains that the parents do not make an effort to participate in the activities.

Member Dorianne Callus asked whether information about activities by DYAM can be circulated to parents of deaf children by CRPD. JS replied that DYAM can ask the Forum of Youth with Disabilities which is part of CRPD.

Board Member LRX suggested that ideally, DYAM together with DPAM get in touch with the Cochlear Implant Association in order to work together, in the hope that more deaf youth become members of the Deaf community. All members present for the AGM agreed with this suggestion.

President AX concluded this section by saying that DYAM are very active and working very hard, however, the COVID-19 is not helping as many parents are also afraid to participate in the activities due to the pandemic.

5. Financial Accounts 2020

The financial accounts were presented by Joann Spiteri.

- The Total Income for the year 2020 amounted to €60,250, up by €14,234 from the year 2019;
- The Association achieved a surplus for the year of €25,401 compared to a surplus of €2,241 in the year 2019;
- As at 31 December 2020 the total asset amounted to €107,206. while the accumulated funds were €53,342 up from €27,941 in 2019

Joann explained that most of the net income came from erasmus+ projects at €24,742, whereas other income included €1,220 from donations, €525 from membership, €53 from interests, and €43 from the sale of batteries and alarm clocks.

JS also explained that:

- The surplus of BANOFFEE for 2020 was estimated as 5% and it has proven to be 24.19%. The same figure or higher is expected for 2021 and 2022. Sign Link is also delivering a surplus in the same range
- In September 2021 the association was awarded a new Erasmus+, “Sign Teach Online”, whose first contribution of € 12,316 has been paid
- In August 2021 the association received from the UK the first installments of “Ms & Mr Gilian deceased” for a total amount of £ 60,000.

- In June 2021 in the name of the Association were opened two new bank accounts with no monthly fee, with free online banking and cards facility. They are with “Wise Bank (online/UK) and APS (local).

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Member George Vella complimented the work of DPAM throughout 2020, in relation to DPAM’s accounts. He said that when he was in the committee before, he was careful in the way how to organize the accounts for the accountant, while at the same time ensuring that the accounts are laid out to members of DPAM in an easy manner. In the past there were more members, and over the years the number of members started to decline. He said that Nowadays the way that accounts are explained and presented can be tricky, as either the older members or the younger members may not understand the way that accounts are presented, due to different ways of how LSM is used. The older members may have a different dialect / a different way of using LSM, and the committee may use LSM as understood by the younger members.

With regards to the will of deceased Gillian Doe, George Vella asked whether the committee thanked the family of the deceased.

George Vella complimented the hard work of the Erasmus+ projects and encouraged the committee to involve older and younger Deaf members, rather than focus on Deaf youth only. By encouraging participation of Deaf members from different age groups can hopefully help in increasing the number of members in Malta’s the Deaf community. Joann said that the committee did a lot of hard work voluntarily, creating videos, sharing as much information as possible, and trying to make all the information accessible to all members of the Deaf community. She added that members who were not part of the committee should give a helping hand, ie if a member is not interested in participating, a member could support the committee by making other Deaf members aware of the information, rather than just remain silent.

With regards to the will of Gillian Doe, AX explained that at first, the committee thought the email communication received regarding the will was junk mail, and the committee kept deleting the emails. Finally, a letter was received by post, so AX asked a lawyer to check whether the UK lawyers were real or whether it could be fraud. That’s when the committee found out that it was not fraud. From then, paperwork was signed, meetings were set up, and Ms Ann Soden the executor came to Malta to discuss the deceased’s estate. The committee met with Ms Soden who also wanted to ensure that we were not fraud. The committee explained what the

Association does, what the Association can do with the funds received from the will, and how much Deaf people can benefit from such funds. The committee members also expressed their gratitude with Ms Soden.

Joann explained that DPAM employed Gianmarco Santirocco as a project manager, since the committee was finding it impossible to keep up with all the administrative work that was required by all the projects, especially since the committee work on a voluntary basis. Mr Santirocco handles all projects, including the writing of reports, organization of projects, and administrative work. Joann explained that he is paid a full time salary with project funds received from the EU.

The Financial Accounts Report was approved by all members.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

The Administrative Report for 2020 was presented by Emma Ripard Xuereb. She gave a run down of the Activities that were organized in 2020:

- a. Board Meetings: 21st January 2020, 3rd March 2020, 7th April 2020 (Online), 29th May 2020 (Online), 22nd June 2020 (Online), 20th July 2020 (Online), 24th August 2020 (Online), 30th September 2020 (Online), 28th October 2020 (Online), 25th November 2020 (Online), 23rd December 2020 (Online).
- b. Transport Malta Meeting Annabelle and Joann (January)
- c. Project Deaf Youth Club in Norway (February)
- d. Dar il Kaptan Sign Language Training (March)
- e. EUD Covid19 impact Loran (May)
- f. OC - European DeafBlind Camp 2022 Loran (May)
- g. AGM 2020 (July)
- h. Life at GO basic sign language Joann (July)
- i. TVM Ras ImBRAs Melissa (September)
- j. EUDY GA 2020 Loran (September)
- k. TVM LSM campaign with KLSM (September)
- l. MUDY Meeting Emma (October)
- m. EUD GA 2020 Annabelle (November)

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Member Dorianne Callus suggested that the committee adds the year and whether or not the activity was held online. She said to add '2020' and 'online' on the presentation, to make it more clear.

Member Chris Ripard asked what MUDY means. Emma explained that it means Media Union of Deaf Youth.

Member George Vella asked whether there was any progress following the meetings held with Transport Malta about the Deaf people's driving license renewal, which he kindly offered to attend when the committee was unable to. Joann Spiteri explained that from 5 Deaf persons who had this issue with their driving license, the issue was resolved for 4 of them, whereas one person did not resolve the issue due to a valid reason given by Transport Malta.

Loran Ripard Xuereb continued to explain that after the meeting that George Vella attended in 2019, another meeting was set up at CRPD, which was attended by Annabelle Xerri and Joann Spiteri in order to find a solution for Deaf drivers. The issue was still ongoing as due to COVID-19 everything was put on hold.

The Administrative Report was approved by all members.

7. OUR PROJECTS

Sarah Bezzina Wettinger discussed the Association's Erasmus+ projects with the members. In summary, DPAM is participating in 5 projects between 2019 and 2022, namely:

- Banoffee
- SignLinks
- SignTeach Online
- Pancake
- Free Diving

Joann Spiteri said that participation in the projects is very educational and a very nice experience. Sarah added that the committee wishes that all members of DPAM participate in the projects, and not just the committee members. This is crucial for the growth of the Deaf community. Emma Ripard Xuereb explained that when members participate in certain projects, they can be paid for the work that they do, ie the work is not voluntary. Annabelle Xerri explained that payment is given according to the hours spent working. Finally, Loran Ripard Xuereb said that information about possible participation in the projects is published on social media,

and welcomed all members to ask the committee questions and for more information, so that they can participate in the projects.

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Member Matthew Pace asked whether only members of DPAM can participate in the projects, and he also said that he never saw any posts on Facebook about participation in the projects. Sarah said that yes, only members of DPAM should participate and that due to COVID-19 there was less participation in the projects and participants stopped traveling abroad during 2020.

George Vella added that not all Deaf people have Facebook and may not be able to access such information on social media.

Annabelle Xerri explained that all information was published also on websites, information was written in English, Maltese, and interpreted in Maltese Sign Language. But still, no one was interested in participating, possibly because Deaf people had no interest in the subjects, especially those which focused on birds and flowers. AX agreed that the subjects may not be of interest to Deaf members, however the projects were still important as these brought profit to DPAM whereas Deaf members would be paid for the work that they do.

8. CONCLUSION

With regards to COVID-19, Annabelle Xerri explained that the committee tried to organize meetings and push for Deaf members to be put on the urgent list to get the COVID-19 vaccine. AX ended the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and welcomed everyone to enjoy some food and drinks responsibly, due to COVID-19.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45PM.

You may also view the minutes in LSM on the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66odnz-o8EQ&list=PLr2ms_vulExVF-fG-VBXCD3_4-H7F4ipB