



MALTA PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE

'Inclusion meets Excellence'

ANNUAL REPORT

2020

FORWARD

Dear *Athletes* and *Members*,

It is our privilege to be presenting you with the Second Annual Report of the Malta Paralympic Committee (MPC), covering the period from *1st January 2020* to *31st December 2020*.

In this Annual Report we reflect upon the challenges and opportunities brought about a year characterised by the Covid-19 pandemic. Without a doubt, the year 2020 has been a unique learning curve on many levels. The pandemic has not only profoundly impacted our *day-to-day* lives and activities, many of which we took for granted, but also widely impacted the local and international sporting community. With a variety of preventative and restrictive measures introduced by public health authorities the world over, the training and the sporting calendar was turned on its head, marked by a flurry of cancellations of both local and international competitions and other sporting events. This uncertainty ultimately culminated in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games being postponed by a year.

Notwithstanding the difficulties endured by sport associations, coaches, and para athletes, the MPC wishes to applaud the para sport community for doing what it knows best - to adapt to the constantly evolving circumstances and endeavour to see the positive side of things. To the extent permitted, para-athletes and coaches continued to work hard, in a committed and dedicated manner, with the aim of ensuring they will be ready from the word 'go' once full training and competitions resume.

In similar fashion, the MPC sought to attune itself to the prevailing circumstances and recalibrate its strategy and plans to reflect with the realities of the day. Against this background, the MPC shifted its educational and outreach programmes online, organising a series of educational webinars with multiple stakeholders. Moreover, the MPC sought to direct its resources to working on its medium-to-long term goals, so as to be well prepared when a sense of normality resumes.

The MPC is also encouraged with the enhanced level of interest in its mission statement and initiatives, and is humbled by the fact that, despite the circumstances, new para athletes have joined the fold, with para athletes in para cycling, para karate, para rowing and para taekwondo. Moreover, the MPC is confident that the strategic relations it has formulated with, among others, the University of Malta, the Medical Students Association of Malta, the Malta Health Students Association, Karen Grech Hospital, the Children Development Assessment Unit, Mater Dei Hospital, the Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Sport Malta and the Maltese Olympic Committee, will reap fruit for the development of Para Sport in Malta in the years to come.

Looking towards the year ahead, the Executive Committee has set itself the overriding target of improving para sport grassroots and coaching development, with a view to gradually introducing new para athletes, and supporting local coaches enhance their knowledge in coaching para-athletes. Finally, the MPC remains committed to supporting its Tokyo 2021 hopefuls and wishes all aspiring Paralympians the best for the year ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Executive Committee of the Malta Paralympic Committee

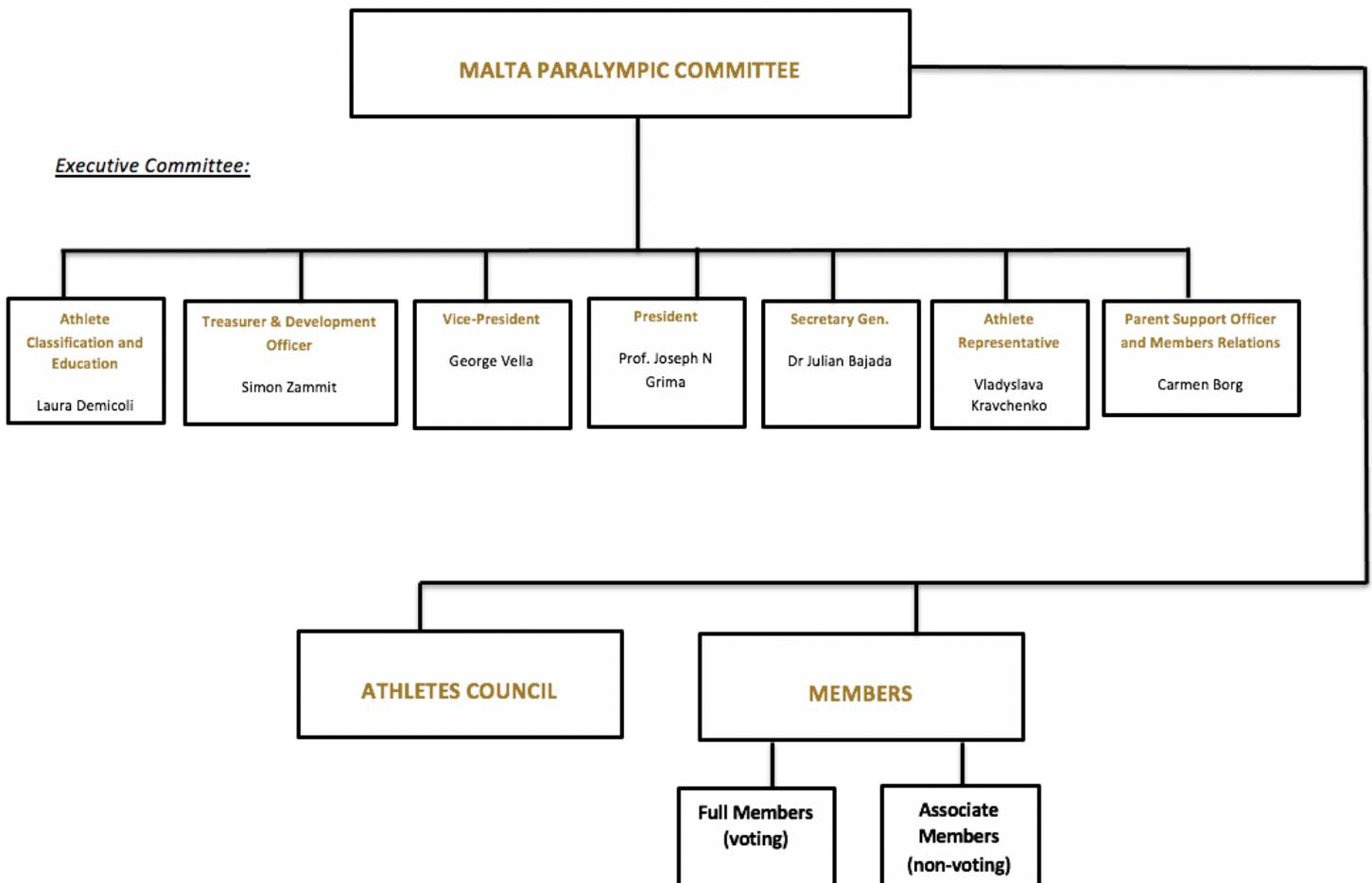


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1/ ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MPC

1.1 Organisational Structure



- i. **Executive Committee:** responsible for *day-to-day* management and operations of the Malta Paralympic Committee. The current Executive Committee was elected at the First-Elective Annual General Meeting of the Malta Paralympic Committee, held in July 2018 and approved unanimously by the voting members present for a 3-year term (2018-2021).
- ii. **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 sport on the Paralympic Programme, whereas Associated Membership is available for national sports associations and federations governing a sport not on the Paralympic Programme, and other entities and individuals, such as honorary members.

Full Members:

- Malta Archery Association
- Malta Tennis Federation
- Malta Rowing Association
- Malta Canoeing Association
- Malta Badminton Association
- Malta Triathlon Federation
- Malta Volleyball Association
- Malta Wheelchair Basketball Association

Associated Members:

- Malta Football Association
- Wheelchair Dance
- Malta Cycling Federation

- iii. **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. The council is currently composed of:

- Vladyslava Kravchenko (Chairperson, para swimming)
- Noel Aquilina (Vice-Chairperson, Wheelchair Basketball)
- Darren Fenech (para athletics)
- Antonio Flores (para athletics)
- Thomas Borg (para athletics)
- Stephen Fenech (Wheelchair-Dancing)

1.2 Status of the MPC as a Voluntary Organisation and Sports Association

The Malta Paralympic Committee is a non-profit and independent entity, registered as a voluntary organisation (VO/1616) and registered as an Association with SportMalta (No.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 on the basis of principles of good governance, integrity and disclosure.

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. You are invited to see the MPC's financial statements for further information on the financial performance and position of the MPC for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.

1.4 Membership with International Paralympic Committee

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.

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. In practice, this translates into a number of benefits, including:

- ✓ *Eligibility of national Para Athletes for IPC Classification*
- ✓ *Eligibility to compete at IPC approved competitions*
- ✓ *Eligibility to compete at the Paralympic Games*
- ✓ *Access to funding through the Agitos Foundation and other international partners*
- ✓ *Access to Educational and Development Programmes*



2/ EDUCATION & AWARENESS

One of the principal focus areas of the MPC during 2020 was the strengthening of its educational, outreach and awareness initiatives. The MPC believes that through its initiatives in this area, the development of local para sport will be supported by:

- ✓ *Raising awareness on para sport and its benefits*
- ✓ *Integrating para sport into holistic patient care (from rehabilitative to preventative care)*
- ✓ *Guiding individuals with a congenital physical impairment, or individuals who suffered traumatic incidents resulting in a physical impairment (ex. amputation or spinal cord injury)*
- ✓ *Developing local expertise in para sport and classification*
- ✓ *Creating a collaborative network between the MPC and the medical and healthcare community*
- ✓ *Performance testing and evaluation for competitive para-athletes*
- ✓ *Expertise in adaptative equipment (prosthesis, etc.)*

Some of the initiatives pursued by the MPC on this front include joint projects between:

University of Malta, Institute for Physical Education & Sport Foundations in Coaching

For the 2nd year running, members of the Executive Committee were entrusted with delivering a module dedicated to the Adapted Sports and Paralympic Sports Movement to students studying for the Foundations of Coaching course at the Institute for Physical Education & Sport at the University of Malta.



The Executive Committee will work towards rolling out further units and cementing the same on the national sport and educational curriculum.

Introduction to Paralympic Sport, Classification and Coaching collaboration with Malta Medical Students' Association, Malta Health Students' Association and the University of Malta Degree Plus Unit

This University of Malta Degree Plus Unit was introduced in collaboration with the Malta Medical Students Association (MMSA) and the Malta Health Students Association (MHSA). Through this unit, students medical and health students gained both theoretical and practical experience relating to para sport and aimed at integrating para sport as an intrinsic element of holistic patient care and rehabilitation.

Degree+



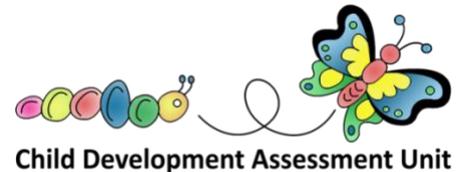
This unit was also intended to allow participants to gain first-hand insight into the benefits and social impact of para sport through the outreach and awareness activities forming part of this unit. A series of three webinars were held as part of this unit, covering:



- Session 1, 6 November 2020: Intro / What is Malta Paralympic Committee, Other similar entities - Special Olympics and Deaf Olympics, Why do it? Meetings the athletes.
- Session 2, 4 December 2020: The structure of para sports (including basic classification) and medical aspects.
- Session 3, 18 December 2020: Putting it in practice, meeting with Coaches.

Introduction to Paralympic Sport and Holistic Patient Care collaboration with the Children Development Assessment unit

The Malta Paralympic Committee (MPC) has joined forces with the Physiotherapy Department within the Child Development Assessment Unit (CDAU), in a bid to introduce children with physical impairments to Paralympic Sport.



Treating patients up to the age of 16, the CDAU assists children with various health conditions, including physical mobility impairments such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida and other neurodevelopmental conditions.

The partnership will see the MPC provide training and support assistance to the team at the CDAU, patients and their parents, with a view to raising awareness and knowledge on Paralympic Sport, its benefits, local and international opportunities in Paralympic Sport, and how the CDAU and MPC's roles are complimentary to achieving holistic and patient-specific care that integrates Paralympic Sport into the child's development plan. The underlying theme of the joint initiative is that of putting in place the necessary resources and collaborative network through which a pipeline of prospective para athletes may be introduced into Paralympic Sport.

Introduction to Paralympic Sport and Holistic Patient Care collaboration with the Rehabilitation Unit of Karen Grech Hospital

The MPC has paired up with the Rehabilitation Unit of Karen Grech Hospital (KGH) in a drive to develop Paralympic Sport in Malta. Recalling the very origins of the Paralympic Games at the grounds of Stoke Mandeville Hospital (UK), a hospital which treated numerous spinal cord injury patients and amputees in the aftermath of World War II, the collaboration between MPC and KGH was a natural fit.



The collaboration is aimed at creating long-lasting synergies between MPC and KGH, with the objective of gradually moving patients at KGH suffering from a physical impairment, be it from birth or due to life-changing traumatic accidents, into Paralympic Sport. The partnership will see the MPC provide training to consultants, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and other medical and healthcare professionals on the salient aspects of Paralympic Sport, creating a pool of local expertise in aspects such as the Para Sport classification system, adaptive sport equipment and preventative or remedial care. In addition, members of the Executive Committee of the MPC, coaches and active para athletes will work hand-in-hand with the medical team in formulating a patient-specific holistic patient care plan that integrates Paralympic Sport into the patient's rehabilitation programme.

Through this combination, the ultimate target is that of fostering a supportive environment and reference point through which a pipeline of prospective para athletes may be introduced into Paralympic Sport, leaving a profound impact on their life and the sporting community.

I'mPOSSIBLE Programme

The MPC has undertaken the preliminary work to introduce the I'mPOSSIBLE Programme in a number of schools as from the scholastic year 2021-22.

The I'mPOSSIBLE Programme is a global educational programme spearheaded by the Agitos Foundation, which seeks to raise awareness on Paralympic Sport and to instil the Paralympic values of courage, determination and inspiration among school children.



The MPC plans on rolling out the first phase of the programme in the early months of 2020, with the intention of expanding the programme to other schools from one scholastic year to the next.

3/ OUTREACH AND BRAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The MPC values the importance of creating a brand identity to which society can relate to, a brand centred upon the abilities of its para athletes and a brand embodying the Paralympic values. Through its website, social media channels, and relations with independent media houses, the MPC has put together a multi-faceted distribution platform to effectively deliver its message to the widest audience possible.

3.1 Online and Social Media Channels

Website: www.maltapara.com
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MaltaParalympicCommittee/>
Instagram: [paralympics_malta](https://www.instagram.com/paralympics_malta)

Over the course of 2020, the MPC saw its following on Facebook increase significantly, reaching 2,800+ followers, up from 1,500+ followers at the beginning of the year, with one of its posts reaching over 40k+ views.

3.2 MPC and para athletes featured on various media

Over the course of 2020, multiple members of the Executive Committee, para athletes and para coaches were invited to share their experience in Paralympic Sport and their vision for the future of Paralympic Sport on various television programmes and were featured by various printed and online media houses, including interviews on TVM Sports Panorama, TVM Sport, Zona Sport, Sport Extra, Lovin Malta, Bulletproof Culture, Times of Malta, Sunday Circle Magazine, Pink Magazine and Malta Today.

Through these interviews, audiences obtained an insight into the aspirations of local para athletes and the challenges they face – and, more importantly, how they seek to overcome them. Moreover, these interviews afforded coaches with the opportunity to demonstrate how to integrate para athletes within able-bodied clubs and teams, whilst also adding value by working closely with para athletes to better understand how to enhance their sporting performance through adapted training techniques.

4/ PARA SPORT DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Para Sport Development

The MPC has focused its attention towards the development of a core set of para sport disciplines, namely:

- *Para Swimming*
- *Para Athletics*
- *Para Archery*
- *Wheelchair Basketball*
- *Wheelchair Dancing*

In addition, the MPC is pleased to announce new para athletes practicing new Para Sport disciplines:

- *Para Karate*
- *Para Taekwondo*
- *Para Rowing*
- *Para Cycling*

The rationale behind the concept of a core set of para sport disciplines was driven by the strategic objective of building the right foundations by adopting a '*start small and start smart*' approach. The Executive Committee hopes that this will serve as a model for the development of further para sport disciplines, and a learning curve to understand the needs, obstacles, and opportunities, and to share these experiences with other national sports associations and para athletes. **In the longer run, the intention is to shift emphasis toward the development of 'team sports', so as to foster family ties between para athletes and the sporting community.**

The MPC wishes to applaud the **Aquatic Sports Association of Malta (ASA)** – who have been at the forefront of empowering that para swimming is part and parcel of its vision for aquatic sport in Malta and has ensured that para swimming athletes and coaches are fully supported in attaining their goals - as well as the new executive committee of **Athletics Malta** for the approach adopted towards the development of para athletics, with President Andy Grech taking a lead role in assisting with the development of para athletics and supporting our elite para athletics athletes in the build-up to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. The MPC believes that the model of collaboration that have been forged between MPC and the ASA and Athletics Malta respectively is one that augurs well for the development of para swimming and para athletics and one that the MPC is committed to emulating with other national sports federations and associations.

The MPC has also worked closely with Siggiewi Rowing Club to introduce para athletes to indoor para rowing, a new para sport discipline on the local scene that is suitable to individuals having lower body physical impairments. In addition, Siggiewi Rowing Club is actively working on collaborating with rowing clubs in Italy who have experience and expertise in para rowing, with a view to introducing exchange programmes and training camps.

The MPC is pleased to announce that the number of active Para athletes in 2020 grew significantly:

Para sport discipline	Number of active para athletes
<i>Para Swimming</i>	<i>8 athletes</i>
<i>Para Athletics</i>	<i>4 athletes</i>
<i>Para Karate</i>	<i>1 athlete</i>
<i>Para Taekwando</i>	<i>1 athlete</i>
<i>Wheelchair Basketball</i>	<i>8 athletes</i>
<i>Para Rowing</i>	<i>1 athlete</i>
<i>Para Cycling</i>	<i>1 athlete</i>

4.2 Training and Coaching Opportunities

The Executive Committee has initiated discussions with its international counterparts at the International Paralympic Committee, World Para Swimming and World Para Athletics in order to roll out a coaching and training scheme for local coaches and athletes. The objective of this scheme is to develop local expertise (from classifiers, to sport scientists, physiotherapist, and coaches), a pivotal objective in creating the right environment in which national sport associations and individual Para athletes feel supported in a professional and effective manner. It is hoped these schemes may be implemented as Covid-19 restrictions are restricted over the course of 2021.

4.3 Classification

The Executive Committee is cognisant of the challenges surrounding the classification process and rulebook, including the necessity, at present, of having to travel overseas to obtain official classification. In this respect, the Executive Committee cannot but mention the unfortunate outcome of the classification of local para marathon runner Darren Fenech, which resulted in being allocated a para athletics sports class which only features short-distance para athletics on the sporting programme, meaning Darren Fenech could not compete in the middle and long distance running events.

In an effort to ensure local para athletes and coaches are better supported in aligning the training regime according to the sports class and sports events across different para sport disciplines, the MPC is evaluating the possibility of setting up a national classification panel comprised of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical consultants and other eligible professionals in accordance with the international rules and standards of the International Paralympic Committee and the respective international para sport bodies responsible for classification.

5/ EVENTS AND COMPETITIONS

Unfortunately, the events and competitions calendar for 2020 was severely disrupted, with the majority of international competitions being postponed or cancelled altogether. That notwithstanding, local para-athletes continued to compete at local competitions, to the extent permitted by the regulations and protocols issued by the public health authorities in an effort to contain the spread of Covid-19.

6/ RELATIONS WITH KEY PARTNERS AND ASSOCIATIONS

International Paralympic Committee and Agitos Foundation

Over the course of the year, the MPC continued to strengthen its relations with its main international counterparts, the International Paralympic Committee and the Agitos Foundation. The MPC has been working on a number of potential projects with the IPC and Agitos Foundation and has laid down the groundwork for the local implementation of such projects in the very near future.

Maltese Olympic Committee

The Malta Paralympic Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the Maltese Olympic Committee for its support and practical guidance which has benefitted the Malta Paralympic Committee in implementing its objectives. Together, the national governing bodies for Olympic Sport and Paralympic Sport are actively seeking avenues for collaboration. An important development in this respect, is the Maltese Olympic Committee's announcement that para sport will be on the sports programme of the Games of the Small States of Europe which will be hosted in Malta in 2023.

Sport Malta

Our relations with Sport Malta continue to deepen and we are pleased to report that Sport Malta has supported our initiatives, including by way of the granting of financial assistance for para-athletes and coaches for participation at international competitions and events. The MPC is seeking to strengthen these ties by working closely with the Sports Promotion Unit within Sport Malta to raise awareness on Paralympic Sport and drive its uptake.

Deaf Sports

The MPC is honoured to have as its Vice-President, Mr. George Vella, one of Malta's foremost deaf athletes in long-distance athletics event and President of the Malta Deaf Sports Association. This ensures that our two entities work hand-in-hand for the benefit of their members and affiliated athletes.

Athletes' Council

The MPC is devoted to implementing the IPC's commitment of putting athletes at the heart of Paralympic Sport. Strong athlete representation in decision-making processes was one of the top priorities for the newly elected Executive Committee and the first Malta Paralympic Athletes' Council was formed. To date, members of the Malta Paralympic Athletes' Council have actively contributed towards the agenda set out in the 'National Strategy for Para Sport'.

7/ CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite facing a tumultuous year characterised by uncertainty, the Executive Committee of the Malta Paralympic Committee remains in well spirits and encouraged by the milestones and improvements made in 2020.

Guided by the over-arching principle that *'Inclusion meets Excellence'*, the Malta Paralympic Committee is committed to remaining steadfast in its mission to empower individuals with physical impairments to fulfil their full potential, leaving a positive impact on society in the process.

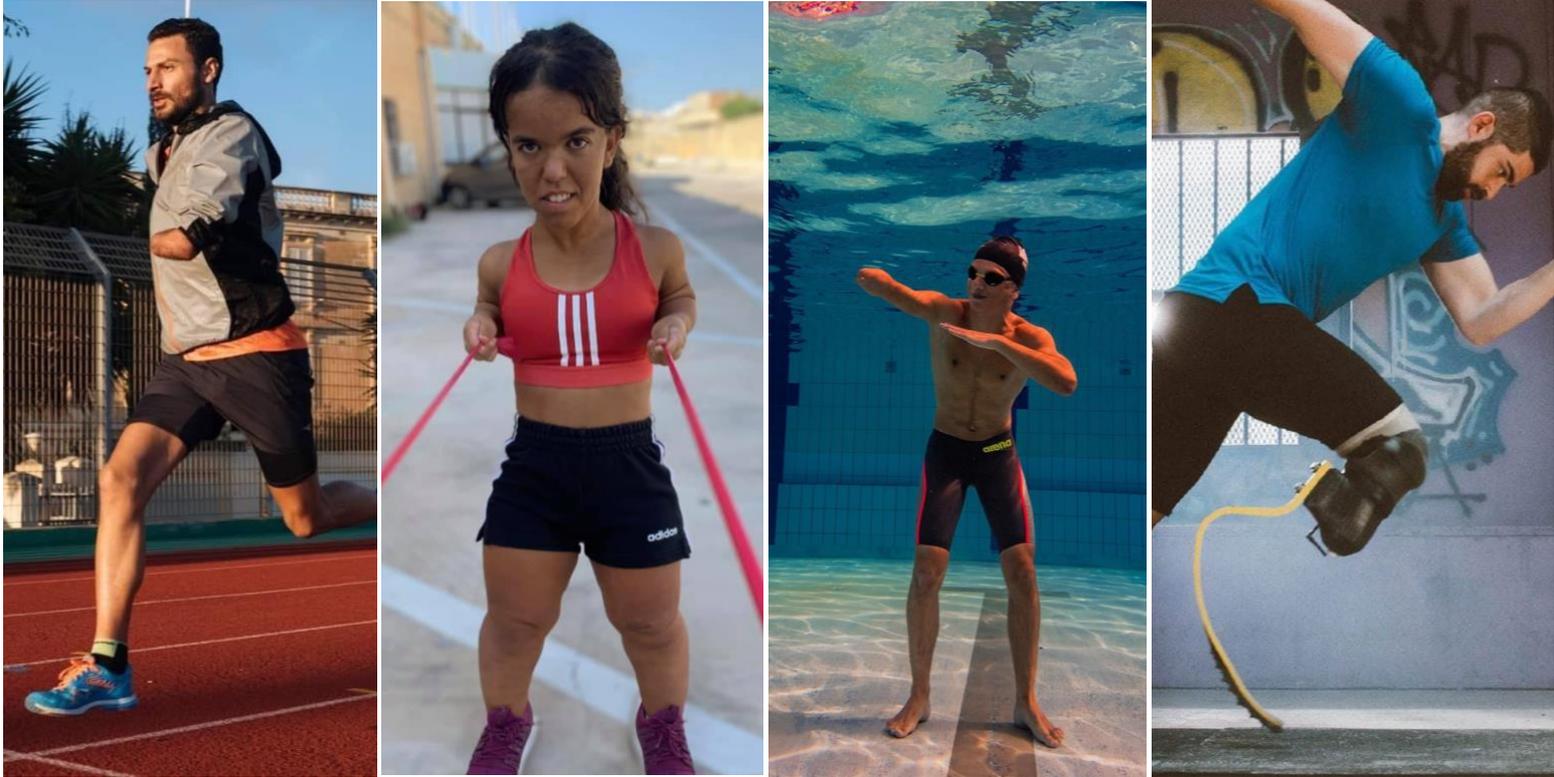
Finally, the Malta Paralympic Committee wishes to thank its dedicated para athletes, coaches, parents, sports administrators and other stakeholders who are fundamental in seeing our vision for Paralympic Sport in Malta come to fruition.

Signed by:

Prof. Joseph N. Grima
MPC President

Dr Julian Bajada
MPC Secretary General

2020 - YEAR IN REVIEW



- INCLUSION MEETS EXCELLENCE -







MALTA PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE

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