



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



United Nations Special Rapporteur
on the rights of persons with disabilities



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR INCLUSION,
VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS
AND CONSUMER RIGHTS

Conference on Transition towards Independent Living within the Community

For Persons with Disabilities

Draft Concept Note & Organization of Work

14-15 February 2023

1- Background on the Arab-EU Research Network on Disability

The Arab-EU Research Network on Disability was founded in 2022 by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Government of Malta and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It acts as an inter-regional platform for knowledge exchange and capacity building. It will bring together academics, researchers and institutions from both Europe and the Arab region for the shared objective of pursuing research as a driver for change to ensure greater social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The Network is established under the umbrella of the “**Valletta Political Declaration**” which affirmed the rights of persons with disabilities, and which also established the “EU-Arab Cooperation Forum on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” (to be known as the “**Valletta Forum**”). The declaration was signed on 25 April 2019 in a forum co-hosted by the Maltese government and ESCWA. Twenty-two countries and entities adopted the Valletta Declaration: Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Hungary, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, State of Palestine, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Spain and Tunisia, together with ESCWA and the League of Arab States.

2- Article 19 of the CRPD: Transition towards Independent Living within the Community

This academic conference will focus on the theme of independent living and being included in the community, a right confirmed in Article 19 of the CRPD. It states that “States Parties to the present Convention recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community”¹.

However, this right is far from realized. A study by ESCWA on “Barriers to implementing Article 19: A study on the institutionalization of persons with disabilities in select Arab countries”² found that there is large knowledge gap on the status of residential institutions currently set up in the region. The study also found that “few of the institutions studied are providing the kind of care and services required to facilitate the integration and independent living of persons with disabilities in their communities. It also

¹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html>

² https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/barriers-implementing-article-19-institutionalization-persons-disabilities-en_0.pdf

found that in many Arab states, families often turn to institutionalization due to a lack of alternative care options and the inaccessibility of many public spaces, services and facilities.”³

3- Call for Papers

The Network issued a Call for Papers in April 2022 and received a number of abstracts. A peer-review committee was founded, and it selected the best submissions. The selected papers will be presented during the conference and published in both English and Arabic.

4- Date and location

The conference will be held in-person at the UN-House in Beirut, Lebanon on Tuesday and Wednesday 14-15 February 2023. Arabic and English interpretation will be available during the event.

5- Participants

The target audience for this conference would be all relevant stakeholders from both Europe and the Arab region, including policy makers, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), universities, researchers, and representatives from the public and private sector.

³ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html>

6- Provisional Organization of Work

Day (1)	
9:00- 9:30	Registration
Conference on “Transition towards Independent Living within the Community”	
9:30 – 10:00	Opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ESCWA - Government of Malta - UN Special Rapporteur
10:00 – 10:45	Session 1: Independent Living under the CRPD: challenges and opportunities in Europe and Arab region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UN Committee on Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ Perspective on Independent Living - Outcomes of ESCWA’s sub-regional consultations with OPDs on independent living <i>Discussion Q&A</i>
10:45 – 11:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:00 – 12:00	Session 2: Presentation and discussion of 2 academic papers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each author will have 15 minutes to present their paper, in addition to 5 minutes for the respondent, and 10 minutes for Q&A
12:00 – 13:30	Session 3: Presenting case studies and good practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The experience of Jordan in independent living - The Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) Arab regional network - Opportunities and challenges of independent living in Europe: Case study of Malta <i>Discussion Q&A</i>
13:30 – 14:30	<i>Lunch</i>
14:30 – 15:30	Session 4: Presentation and discussion of 2 academic papers <p>Each author will have 15 minutes to present their paper, in addition to 5 minutes for the respondent, and 10 minutes for Q&A</p>
Day (2)	
9:30 – 9:40	<i>Recap of main outcomes of day 1</i>

9:40 – 10:40	<p>Session 5: Presentation and discussion of 2 academic papers</p> <p>Each author will have 15 minutes to present their paper, in addition to 5 minutes for the respondent, and 10 minutes for Q&A</p>
10:40 – 11:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:00 – 12:00	<p>Session 6: Presentation and discussion of 2 academic papers</p> <p>Each author will have 15 minutes to present their paper, in addition to 5 minutes for the respondent, and 10 minutes for Q&A</p>
12:00 – 13:00	<p>Session 7: Career prospects for early and mid-career researchers in disability</p> <p>A dedicated workshop for MA and PhD students and younger Early to Mid-Career Researchers to explore their plans and future prospects</p>
13:00 – 13:15	<p>Concluding remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary of main points to drive the research and policy agenda on independent living - Next steps for the network and future activities
13:15 – 14:15	<i>Lunch</i>