

CAHDPH
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Lithuania ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in 2010 and has taken steps to implement the provisions of the Convention as well as possible and to ensure the quality of life of people with disabilities. This means that the state has taken on very important international obligations before the international community regarding the assurance of equal opportunities for disabled people in all areas of life.

Consideration of Lithuania's first report, which was presented to the Committee in 2012 on implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, took place at the fifteenth session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held in Geneva on 6-7 April 2016.

We are pleased that the Committee evaluated our country favourably for increasing public awareness in order to change the negative attitudes and stereotypes associated with disabilities; for submitting amendments to the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Elections to the Seimas and the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Referendum which would allow for voting to take place via accessible electronic voting systems; and for including disabled people's organisations in the preparation of the National Programme for Social Integration of the Disabled for 2013-2019.

In order to properly implement the recommendations made by the Committee, we are putting the finishing touches on a plan for the implementation of the recommendations which provides for specific measures to ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities in society. All of the country's main ministries and institutions responsible for the social integration of people with disabilities have been included in implementation of the measures provided in the plan.

One of the key recommendations – creation of an independent monitoring mechanism for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – is already being implemented. The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania approved a draft amendment to the Law on Social Integration of People with Disabilities. Financial resources have been planned in the state budget to implement this goal.

Of no less importance in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the role of the family in the process of social inclusion of people with disabilities. The 2016-2020 Action Plan for Comprehensive Family Services began being carried out in Lithuania this year. This is the coordinated provision of education, social, health and legal services for the child and the family in order to enable and help the family to deal with crisis situations, and to reduce social exclusion by ensuring service quality and accessibility as close to home as possible.

We have been talking for years about the negative impact of institutional care and the need to reform the social care system. Thanks to European Union structural funds, an infrastructure of daycare centres for children with disabilities is rapidly being developed and family social work is being promoted. Currently, 27 trial institutions have been selected where reforms are already being introduced.

Without a doubt, this reform will contribute to the state's duty to guarantee and implement the provisions of the Convention to ensure disabled people accessibility, inclusion in the community and the ability to live independently.

We are trying to address the problem of housing and its environment, and we are carrying out an adaptation programme for individual housing. By adopting the Law on Social Integration of People with Disabilities this May, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania created more favourable conditions for adapting housing and public premises to the special needs of the disabled.

Recruitment of persons with disabilities, support of their employment and special measures to help persons with disabilities integrate into the labour market are some of the main challenges in implementing the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We encourage people with disabilities to participate in *active labour market policies* such as subsidised employment and the creation of jobs through subsidies. We introduced these policies with the intention of making it possible for people with disabilities who want to work to receive the necessary support and assistance, as well as to encourage social responsibility and consciousness among employers. Support for self-employment is being organised for people with severe disabilities who want to start their own business.

Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in measures such as vocational training, acquisition of professional skills, job rotation, public works and support for territorial mobility of the unemployed.

I would like to emphasise the importance of protecting the rights of women with disabilities. These women often become victims of multifaceted discrimination, and they are at greater risk of social exclusion and poverty. It is therefore extremely important to take the necessary measures to support women with disabilities and promote their involvement in economic and social life. The measures provided in the action plan for implementation of the 2015-2021 National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men facilitate in implementing this goal.

In implementing the recommendations of the Committee, this action plan is foreseen to be supplemented with measures for the prevention and abolition of discrimination against women and girls with disabilities as well as multifaceted discrimination; greater attention will also be given to empowerment measures for disabled women and girls, especially in promoting their participation in public life.