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## **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EXCHANGE OF BEST PRACTICES ON**

***“Equal enjoyment of human rights  
and freedoms by persons with disabilities:  
Achievements and challenges”***

**Sofia (Bulgaria), 22 March 2016**

*Co-organised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy  
and the Council of Europe*

### **Concept note**

#### **OBJECTIVE**

The International Conference for exchange of best practice on « Equal Enjoyment of human rights and freedoms by persons with disabilities: Achievements and challenges” is organized under the program of the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe - Priority 3 "Protection of vulnerable groups." It will take place on 22 March, 2016, in Boyana residence, Sofia.

The Conference will aim to:

1. Exchange experience and best practices on ensuring conditions for equality of people with disabilities, thereby contributing for respect of their rights and their full participation in social life.
2. Exchange experience on the practical application of modern aspects of equality of people with disabilities in Bulgaria and Member States (MS) of the Council of Europe (CoE).
3. Presentation of achievements and best practices of support to persons with disabilities for life in the community and of exchange of experience with representatives of Bulgaria and other MS of CoE.

## **FORMAT/PARTICIPANTS**

The conference will bring together about 60 participants from different Bulgarian institutions, NGOs of and for persons with disabilities, as well as from other Member States and institutions of the Council of Europe.

## **CONTEXT**

In 2006, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation (Rec(2006)5) to member states launching the Council of Europe Action Plan to promote the rights and full participation of people with disabilities in society: improving the quality of life of people with disabilities. in Europe 2006-2015..

The Action Plan provided a platform to enable societal developments and demographic changes in the MS and to promote the rights of people with disabilities. Its core principles include: independence, freedom of choice, full participation and equal access to political and public life.

The Action Plan serves as a practical tool, a roadmap for political decision-makers. It provides a detailed framework of specific recommendations which also allow for a sufficient level of flexibility to meet the specific conditions of every country, taking into account the geographical, economic, cultural and social diversity of MS and the ongoing processes of transition.

The recommendation urged member states to integrate the Action Plan's principles in their policy, legislation and practice, and implement the actions set out in it. It highlighted the need to continue work on non-discrimination, protection and the promotion of human rights in order to guarantee to persons with disabilities full participation in the life of the community, respect of their freedom of choice, improving the quality of their life and raising awareness of disability as part of human diversity.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force in May 2008, was adopted shortly after the approval of the Action Plan. Both documents – the UN Convention and the Council of Europe Action Plan – are based on the paradigm shift from a historical, medical and rehabilitation model to a human rights-based approach, from patient to citizen, the main aim being to remove existing barriers, strive for full participation of people with disabilities in society and mainstream disability into all policies and at all levels in member states. In 2014 and 2015 the Council of Europe carried out the evaluation of the implementation of the Action Plan. It highlights significant progress and tangible results achieved over the ten years of its implementation such as changes in legislation, service provision, physical environment and attitudes. The evaluation also pointed towards remaining challenges including persistent discrimination and barriers to participation as well as divergence between the standards and practice at national level in all the 47 member States, with the implementation gap remaining a great challenge. .

The Republic of Bulgaria signed the Convention in 2007 and ratified it in 2012. Action Plan 2013 – 2014 containing measures to bring Bulgaria's legislation and policies on persons with disabilities in compliance with the provisions of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities was approved by Decision of the Council of Ministers. .

## **PUBLICATIONS**

The conference conclusions will be posted in the official website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, of the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, and of the Council of Europe.

## **LANGUAGES**

The working languages of the conference will be Bulgarian, English, and French.