

Developments on Disability in Cyprus

Cyprus has some important milestones in front of it in 2017:

- First, on the 27th and 28th of March 2017 during the chairmanship of the Council of Ministers of the CoE Cyprus will host the Launching Conference for the new CoE Disability Strategy: "Human rights: a reality for all".
- Then, in April 2017 Cyprus will have the dialogue with the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on its Initial Report on the implementation of UNCRPD submitted in July 2013.
- In July 2017, after four years of its Initial report Cyprus will submit to the UN Committee the second report on the implementation of the Convention.

In parallel with the preparations for the above the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities being the Focal Point in Cyprus for the implementation of UNCRPD has started working in cooperation with other public services dealing with disability issues to prepare the second National Disability Action Plan. The first one has ended at the end of 2015 and an assessment of its implementation is carried out. The Confederation of the Organisations for the Disabled in Cyprus has been invited to make suggestions on its preferred way for its participation in the drafting of the second Disability Action Plan. Regarding the coordination of the different public services involved this is performed through a network of 85 contact points officially nominated as ministerial and departmental disability contact points.

Regarding measures and programs recently implemented or being in progress the following are the main ones:

Disability assessment and certification

As the basis for any action or intervention is the assessment and certification of individual needs of the person with a disability a first priority in Cyprus was to establish a new modern, credible and reliable Disability Assessment System. The project was co financed by the European Social Fund. The new System is based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO) using disability and functioning assessment protocols and coding on four aspects: body structures, body functions, activities/participation and environmental factors. The first Disability Assessment Center has operated in Nicosia at the end of 2013 and in the last three years more than 3.000 assessments have been carried out. Assessments are performed by teams of doctors and rehabilitation professionals from the private sector with whom the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities has signed contracts for the purchase of their services. The result of the assessment is the issue of a holistic report to the citizen for any disability rights that is entitled to: monthly cash benefits, financial assistance to buy a wheelchair, a car, mobility aids, communication aids, visibility aids etc. In addition, the assessment results in the identification of employment capabilities and the person is informed about the employment schemes that government offers for access in employment.

European Disability Card

This is an Initiative by the European Commission and eight EU member states participate in the project. It concerns the issue of a Disability Card mutually recognized in the eight states offering access to the card holder of certain benefits – as decided by each state - in the sectors of public transport, tourism, culture, sport and leisure. The purpose of the EU Disability Card is to promote mobility, participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities. Cyprus is one of the member states participating in the project according to an agreement with the European Commission and at the time being we have almost concluded consultations with all stakeholders in the public and private sector to formulate the list of benefits that the card holder will be entitled to. The issue of the new Card is expected to start in January 2017 after an approval by the Cypriot Council of Ministers.

Legal Capacity Right

In the field of legal capacity and the state obligations defined by Article 12 of UNCRPD Cyprus is still working in order to find the most appropriate legal way to regulate this right in accordance with the Convention principles. Even more important is the decision on the establishment of the new mechanisms needed to have an effective implementation of any new law and successful support of the person to exercise legal capacity and to decide for him or herself. A working group has undergone long consultations with the participation of representatives of public services, the confederation of the organizations of the disabled and the lawyers association. A decision is expected to be adopted to amend or replace the existing law and provide for the establishment of a supported decision making system.