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## Seminar on awareness raising for persons with disabilities

13-14 December 2017  
Copenhagen, Denmark

### Speaking Notes

**Liri Kopaçi-Di Michele, Head of Equality Division, Council of Europe**

- **Thank Danish authorities** for co-organising and hosting the event (framework: the Danish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE).
- Rights of persons with disabilities are one of the priority areas of the Danish Presidency of the CoE. It shows **political will and commitment** on both the side of Danish authorities and the CoE to engage actively and meaningfully at national and international level and **work closely with persons with disabilities and their organisations to ensure they can exercise and enjoy their fundamental human rights.**
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- The Council of Europe Disability Strategy "Human Rights: A Reality for All" is inspired by our belief that all persons, of all abilities, should have access to and enjoy the full range of human rights. This belief reflects the shift of focus of the approach at the Council of Europe: from disability to ability.

- The Strategy – the result of close cooperation and consultation, government, civil society, regional and international partners, and most important, persons with disabilities and their representative organisations - is a focused, pragmatic, all-inclusive document that guides, support and complements the member States' efforts to promote change and build a barrier-free Europe where persons with disabilities can enjoy their fundamental rights.
- The Strategy seeks to combine ambition with pragmatism: it has identified meaningful and shared goals to which all Council of Europe member States can and should aspire, and sets out the concrete actions we need to undertake to get us there.
- Throughout our work and activities at the Council of Europe, our aim is not just to set standards and uphold the human rights of persons with disabilities, but also to empower persons with disabilities - to bring down barriers and allow them to make use of their skills and talents and contribute to our societies. This is clearly reflected in the Strategy
- We will achieve this through action in the five priority areas identified in the Strategy.
  1. Equality and non-discrimination (Article 5 CRPD)
  2. Awareness raising (Article 8 CRPD) – (you will hear more about this specific priority from the Chair of CAHDPH later on)
  3. Accessibility (Article 9 UNCRPD)
  4. Equal Recognition before the law (Article 12 CRPD)

## 5. Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse (Article 16 CRPD)

- They are anchored in the European Convention on Human Rights and other Council of Europe standards. Each of them is also connected to corresponding Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, aiming at its implementation in practice. The member States have already agreed to these goals by ratifying the UNCRPD.
- And while talking about the UNCRPD, it is important to point out that the Council of Europe Disability Strategy does not create legal obligations for member States. Such legal obligations are clearly set out in the United Nations Convention which we all aspire to implement in practice.
- The priority areas also aim to bring focus to the future Council of Europe work related to disability rights in order to achieve tangible results during the period covered by the Strategy.
- The implementation of the Strategy will be based on a “twin-track” approach. One track comprises specific projects, campaigns, trainings, and activities organised at the national and local levels by national stakeholders in our member States where the Council of Europe can provide support and input such as exchanges of good practices, studies<sup>1</sup> and research.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe has prepared five studies – one for each priority area of the Strategy. This is an example of the kind of support/action at the level of the CoE.

- The second track consists of mainstreaming disability related issues in all the work and activities of the Council of Europe itself.
- It is very important to underline that it is after all, the governments of member States who will drive the implementation of the Strategy in close co-operation with persons with disabilities, represented by their organisations, and all other relevant stakeholders. These include National Human Rights Institutions, Equality Bodies, Ombudsman Institutions, service providers and civil society. Today's event is an example of this.
- To assess progress with the implementation of the Strategy, the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will prepare biennial reports for the attention of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. We all agree on the importance of monitoring closely implementation – it will allow both the Council of Europe and the member States to measure progress, identify gaps and take necessary action to achieve the targeted goals of the Strategy.
- The Conference "Human Rights: a Reality for All" (Cyprus on the 27-28 March 2017), officially launched the Strategy. Discussions, debates and contributions during the Conference, set the foundations and the pace of our work to build a disability-inclusive development agenda towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 in "ensuring that no one is left behind".

- Of course, this cannot be achieved alone. It is necessary to have effective international co-operation; mobilisation of individual, national and local efforts; and grassroots actions in order to become more effective in ensuring the human rights of persons with disabilities. Together, we can change perceptions. Together, we can find the way on how to give every single person the opportunity to make the most out of his or her Abilities.