

# **National Strategy On Achieving Equal Rights for the Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Macedonia**

## **I n t r o d u c t i o n**

When building this Strategy, efforts have been made to approach the building of the Strategy in a differentiated manner. It means that during the writing of certain contents, account has been taken of the roles of all entities in the system of protection, education and rehabilitation concerning the problem of disability.

The differentiated approach means that when one determines the rights, potentials and contributions of the persons with disabilities, the starting point should be the specific needs that these people have, depending on the type and the degree of their disability.

The development of the National Strategy on Achieving Equal Rights for the Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Macedonia is based on European and national legislation and on the Standard Rules for Equalisation of the Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Our country:

- ♠ Calls upon the International Standards on Human Rights, contained in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Agreement on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Agreement on Civilian and Political Rights – they all proclaim rights for all people, without any discrimination;
- ♠ Calls upon the Convention on the Rights on the Child, which prohibits any disability based discrimination and requires introduction of special measures for ensuring the rights of the child with disabilities, as well as the International Convention on Protection of the Rights of all Immigration Workers and their Families, which insists on protective measures for the persons with disabilities;
- ♠ Calls upon the Provisions from the Agreement on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, in order to ensure the rights of girls and women with disabilities;
- ♠ Takes into consideration the Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded People, the Declaration on Social Progress and Development<sup>(11)</sup>, the Principles on Protection of the People with Mental

Diseases and on Improvement of the Mental Health Care<sup>(12)</sup>, as well as other relevant documents passed by the General Assembly;

- ♣ Calls upon the Agreements and recommendations accepted by International Worker's Organisations, with special emphasis on the employment of persons with disabilities without any discrimination;
- ♣ Takes into consideration the recommendations and the activities of the Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations of the United Nations, especially the World's Declaration on Education for all people, the World Health Organisation, the United Nations Children's Fund and other organisations;
- ♣ Complying with the commitment made by all countries concerning environment protection;
- ♣ Knows about the destruction made by wars and disapproves of the use of dangerous materials for production of weapons;
- ♣ Recognises that the World's Program of Activities that refer to persons with disabilities and its definitions for equalisation of the opportunities represents a most sincere wish of the International Community to apply all those International documents and recommendations and to give them practical significance and value;
- ♣ Accepts the fact that the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Persons with Disabilities (1983 – 1992) concerning the implementation of the World's Program of Activities is still valid and calls for continuous action;
- ♣ Recognises that the World's Program of Activities is based upon concepts that are the same in both underdeveloped and industrialised countries;

Bearing in mind the belief that intensive efforts are needed for achieving full human rights and full participation of the persons with disabilities in the society, we repeat that the persons with disabilities and their parents, guardians, representatives and organisations must be active partners of the country's Government in the planning and implementations of all measures that have an impact on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights,

In conformity with the Resolution of the Council for Economic and Social Issues (1990) and on the basis of the specific measures that are needed in order for the persons with disabilities to achieve equal rights as the other people, which are presented in detail in the World's Program of Activities,

In addition, the Resolution 48/49 on the Standard Rules on Equalisation of the Opportunities for the Persons with Disabilities was passed on the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly on 20 December 1993.

Not wanting to present here the complete European set of norms and standards with regard to the persons with disabilities, we will mention another two documents that are thought to be of extreme importance:

“European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms” and

“European Social Charter”.

As far as the internal legal system of the Republic of Macedonia is concerned, three aspects of its Constitution are considered to be of key importance. Namely, Article 1 of the Constitution defines our country as a Social State.

Article 9 of the Constitution provides for equality of all citizens before the Constitution and the Laws. This formal equality is specified in Article 35, Paragraph 3 of the Constitution, according to which the state is obliged to create conditions for inclusion of the persons with disabilities in the society.

These Constitutional provisions in practical terms mean that the state has an obligation, within the social and political measures and the overall legal framework, to take care of the formal equality of persons with disabilities with the other citizens, so that it should care not only for their general needs, but also for their specific needs.

## **I. Developments in the area of protection, education and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities**

There is an undoubted fact that during the 50 - year period of protection, education and rehabilitation of the persons with disabilities, the Republic of Macedonia has had many positive experiences as well as smaller number of negative situations and experiences, the latter often causing some consequences with regard to the continuous development. This can be considered logical if one looks at the overall context of historical, social, health and educational problems that Macedonia inherited after the liberation, which have not been solved in a sufficiently organised and systemic manner.

Nowadays, when numerous documents of the bodies of the specialised UN agencies require the member countries to undertake comprehensive measures for persons with disabilities and to create the necessary conditions for institutionalisation of the

contemporary practice for integral training and rehabilitation, as well as to create conditions for education of appropriate staff.

However, it should be mentioned that a number of issues that are very important for the development of the protection and rehabilitation of the persons with disabilities are not appropriately resolved in the existing laws and by-laws in the areas of social protection, education and health.

The health – educational component of the rehabilitation in our country has not been developed. Although there are two rehabilitation institutions in Macedonia (the Institutes for Rehabilitation of Hearing, Speech and Voice in Skopje and in Bitola), it was impossible for the institutions to introduce remedial rehabilitation practice as a result of the lack of needed legal preconditions.

The educational component is not at an appropriate organisational, technological, program and functional level for all categories of disability. It is necessary to list the following shortcomings:

- The preschool upbringing and education have not been constituted and institutionalised yet. There is incidental practice without a concept, program and links with an early educational treatment.
- The primary education of all categories of children with disabilities is burdened with several shortcomings that are based on obsolete principles with regard to organisation, conception, curriculum and technology.
- Education is not based on rehabilitation, but on strictly educational grounds. As for the children's physical, mental and social status, there is a great variety in all classrooms.

The inclusion of the children with disabilities in regular schools is an imperative and a necessity, but in order to accomplish this goal, certain preconditions need to be fulfilled. First of all, the regular school needs to prepare for acceptance of the children and for implementation of all forms and phases of the integration (inclusion) process.

The secondary education of children with disabilities has all the characteristics of the existing primary education. The young person with disabilities, irrespective of his/her psycho - physical potentials has still been predestined for manual jobs (crafts). This is resulting from the fact that the existing system and practice have not passed the barrier of the handicraft training yet.

The existing system and practice of education of persons with disabilities that are characterised by fragmentation, isolation, incoherence and inefficiency, will need to integrate at institutional, organisational, conceptual, technological, staff and space level in a way and to an extent that are, on the one hand possible and needed, and on the other hand will provide for not only rationality, but maximum efficiency as well.

Starting from the fact that the Centers for Social Work, within the Social Welfare System, do the coordination of activities for meeting the specific needs of children and persons with disabilities in a long period of time, there is a need, without any dilemma, for a more organised and continuous preparation of the community for acceptance and sooner adaptation of the persons with disabilities.

In this context, the Centers for Social Work can, within their legal competencies, undertake a wide range of social and economic measures for improvement of certain conditions, such as material assistance under conditions determined by law, and provide support for resolution of family problems when they occur.

A very important part of the life of persons with disabilities is the use, i.e. organisation of their leisure time, more precisely of their social life, rest and recreation. This problem should be looked at not only from a human, health, social and economic aspect, but from a much wider perspective.

The living of the persons with disabilities has so much to do not only with the fulfillment of their everyday life needs, but also with the overall needs of their families, as already mentioned. This is even more obvious nowadays, in circumstances of an economic crisis, where due to objective and subjective reasons, the persons with disabilities are in a significantly worse situation than the other citizens.

## **II. Basic principles of the National Strategy**

The National Strategy is based upon thorough situation analysis and consequent pointing to the need for making appropriate decisions by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia concerning the protection, education, rehabilitation, vocational training and employment of persons with disabilities. It refers to the following:

- Prevention, early detection, early diagnoses and early treatment;

- Preschool education, primary education, secondary education and higher education for all those where possible;
- Vocational training and employment, family life, social life, rest and recreation;
- Creation of conditions (in families, Centers for Half - Day and Daily Care, as well as housing in small capacity institutions and in homes for small groups of persons with disabilities) for all those persons with a more severe disability who need such help.

### **Content of the National Strategy**

The National Strategy includes the formation of the personality within the primary family, the overall development and the specific needs that occur within the overall health and social protection, education, rehabilitation and all other forms of the individual family life in the society.

### **The family and the development of the personality**

The family is a universal societal group, both from historical and socio-cultural aspect, as well as from the aspect of the individual life. As a biosocial group, the family is a bridge between the society and the individual.

As a specific societal group, the family is a community composed of a husband and a wife, and the children who originate from this community (they can be adopted as well).

The family is also a primary group within which the personality of the child is constituted and is developing. At the same time, the emotional processes lay in the foundation of the family relationships between the members of one family.

There are, generally speaking, two possible situations in which a family with a member with disabilities can be. The first situation is when a primary family has a child with disabilities, and the disability originates either from birth or occurred during life as a result of a disease or an injury. Both situations are very traumatic for the family because they both disturb the balance in the relationship between the parents and their environment, including the family environment as well, and at the same time the parents don't have an adequate role model for performing parental duties, which they would acquire from their parents (trans-generational). In this situation, such a family would need support at several levels.

Families that have a child with a sensor disability (visual or hearing), with a physical handicap or with a learning difficulty (mental disability) need direct counseling. When working with a family that has a child with disabilities, it is very important to understand that the existing infrastructure available for other families is actually an infrastructure for this family too. This practically means that a child with disabilities should have appropriate toys and play games in his/her family, should be able to play with his/her friends, attend kindergartens and go to a regular school.

The situation drastically changes when we are dealing with a secondary family in which the person with disabilities is one of the spouses and a parent. In this situation, in addition to the counseling for the family, if needed, the person with disabilities always needs helping devices for his/her professional activities, for his/her family duties and roles and for the use of the leisure time.

The responsibilities of the state include the passing of an appropriate legislation that will enable the accomplishment of all previously mentioned relationships at a formal level. The state should also establish methodological, technical and institutional arrangements that will make the achievement of all goals possible in the local community and in the family.

## **Prevention**

The term “Prevention” means action, the purpose of which is to prevent physical, intellectual psychological or sensorial disabilities (primary prevention), or to prevent these disabilities from causing permanent functional damages (secondary prevention). Prevention includes a variety of activities such as: primary health care, prenatal and postnatal care, advice about nutrition, a campaign on carrying out immunisation against infectious diseases, measures for control of endemic diseases, safety regulations, programs on prevention of accidents in various fields that includes adaptation of the working environment in order to prevent occupational diseases and disorders resulting from environment pollution or armed conflict.

## **Awareness raising**

With regard to its responsibilities for raising the public awareness concerning the problem of disabilities, the state is obliged to build an appropriate legal and normative system and to enable the persons with disabilities to use the institutions in the place where they live, from the aspect of equal rights of these people with the other citizens, and with the purpose of meeting their needs, development of their potentials and acceptance of their contributions.

The process of awareness raising concerning persons with disabilities should be carried out in various ways, depending on the population we are dealing with. For example, the relevant institutions need to provide timely and updated information to the persons with disabilities and to their families, about the programs and services available for them. At the same time, the professionals need to be kept updated and trained about the latest methods for providing support for the persons with disabilities. Information should be disseminated/given through media to which persons with disabilities have access.

The raising of the public awareness concerning persons with disabilities should be done through a well-managed campaign in the media as well. Such campaign should transmit a positive picture of the persons with disabilities in the public and a message for equal rights and responsibilities for all citizens.

An important contribution to the raising of the public awareness should be the situation where the public education system is organised in such a way that enables full participation and equal opportunities for the children with disabilities. In this respect, it is very important to focus on the specific needs of these children, brought up by them or by their families.

The education and the overall life orientation of the children with disabilities and people should start from their resilience, and this means that they should rely on their own forces and be empowered to use the specific opportunities that arise from the specific circumstances.

In this context, the involvement of the organisations of persons with disabilities is very important, both from the aspect of their advice concerning the planning and assessment of programs for persons with disabilities, and in terms of transferring their own experience to the younger generations.



An important part in the effort of raising the public awareness is the integration of programs and policies on disability into the system of regular education for all children. In this respect, it is necessary to give special courses and workshops for their teachers.

As far as employment is concerned, it is important that employers bear in mind the knowledge about the specific needs of persons with disabilities at work.

## **Health care**

The state should provide effective health care for all persons with disabilities through passing of appropriate legislation and establishing of institutions.

The health care of the population should pay a special attention to early detection, assessment and treatment of disorders in order to prevent, reduce or completely eliminate the occurring of a disability.

If the health treatment is unable to help the existing health problems to be overcome and if a permanent disability occurs, in that case the local services should be able to detect these cases early and to refer them to the appropriate services.

All persons with disabilities, especially the children, have a right to be provided with health care in the regular health system.

The medical professionals should be adequately trained and equipped in order to be able to provide the persons with disabilities with an appropriate health treatment. In this context, it is of particular importance to safeguard and promote the health of the persons with disabilities in order to enable their normal functioning. When performing these activities, the participation of organisations of persons with disabilities is important especially from the aspect of proper planning and assessment of the activities that are conducted within the health care system.

## **Rehabilitation**

The state is responsible for establishing of a system of institutions for rehabilitation.

The programs that are being implemented in these institutions should provide for the best possible independence and functioning of the persons with disabilities. These programs should first of all take into the account the type and the severity of the disability, and then the individual needs, providing for a full participation and equal opportunities for development.

Rehabilitation programs should enable the target population to acquire basic skills, all the way up to the highest levels of education. It is very important here that the person itself and/or his family point to the needs that need to be fulfilled with the program.

It would be best if rehabilitation programs are implemented in the local community. In exceptional cases and within limited periods, rehabilitation can take place out of the place of living, in which case the person with disabilities is provided with food and lodging.

If possible, rehabilitation programs should use experienced persons with disabilities as consultants or trainers, whereas the organisations of persons with disabilities should help in the development of plans or in the assessment of the programs by using the experience of their members.

The rehabilitation we are talking about does not include any primary health care.

### **Availability of services and helping devices**

The services should be directed towards fulfillment of the specific needs for full participation of the persons with disabilities in their private, family, educational and professional life, as well as for their independent and full participation in the everyday life and in informal groups.

The state is responsible for creation of a legal system that will provide helping devices to the disable people. Moreover, the state should provide for the development, production, supply and maintenance of the helping devices.

A helping device is any instrument, equipment, apparatus, appliance, technical resource, software or a technical adjustment that serves the purpose of meeting the specific needs of the persons with disabilities, which should enable their independent and efficient functioning in their private life, family, school, professional groups, everyday life and in informal groups and leisure time.

When supplying the helping devices, the state should take care that they are either free or at a price that is affordable for the person or his family. In addition, the choice of the helping devices should be guided by the disabled person's sex, age and specific needs. This means that the helping devices should be different for different people, i.e. to fit the type and the degree of the disability.

So, in the persons with hearing problems, interpretation services (gesture speech) are very important in addition to adequate helping devices in order for them to be able to communicate with other people.

With regard to the choice of helping devices, one should take into consideration the viewpoints of the persons with disabilities, whereas the organisations of these people should put together a list of appropriate helping devices.

## **Access**

The state should produce regulations that will provide for physical access, as well as access to information and communication for the persons with disabilities. Through introduction of standards and guidelines, one should implement programs that will remove the physical barriers in housing buildings, streets, public transport, public facilities etc. The curricula for architects and civil engineers should include topics that deal with building regulations and designs for persons with disabilities. At the same time, persons with disabilities and their organisations should be enabled to express their opinion on the physical access when building various structures. Moreover, when giving information and enabling communication, one should take account of the type of disability. Therefore, any kind of textbooks, belletristic, professional literature, printed media etc. should be available for the persons with visual disability in the Braille alphabet, recorded on a audio tape, printed with bigger letters, available through speech synthesis etc. For the people with hearing problems, the gesture speech is very important both in their education and in the communication between themselves and with other people.

When providing information and/or enabling communication for the persons with disabilities, one should take into account whether the disable person has other communication problems or understanding problems.

All types of media: radio, television, printed media etc. should be encouraged and financially supported by the state to disseminate information in a way that is accessible for the persons with disabilities.

The producers of computers and computer equipment should be encouraged to make appropriate adaptations for the persons with disabilities since the beginning phases or later.

Every time when specific media for information and communication are provided, one should consult with the organisations of persons with disabilities.

### **Education of persons with disabilities**

The state is obliged to provide a legislative and institutional framework that will provide the children with disabilities, adolescents and adults with equal opportunities for receiving education at all education levels. This education should be realised under regular conditions and it should be a part of the regular system of education.

The general education system is responsible for the education of the persons with disabilities, under regular conditions and as a part of the regular system of education. The education of the persons with disabilities should be reflected in the national planning and in the development of curricula as well.

Persons with disabilities should receive education after an adequate approach and methodological assistance are provided, depending on the specific educational needs that arise from the different types of disability.

Parents of children with disabilities and their organisations should be involved in all levels of education for persons with disabilities.

All children, regardless of their sex and the type and severity of their disability, should receive the mandatory education.

In the process of education particular attention needs to be paid to the education of very young children with disabilities, preschool children and adults with disabilities. The policy of the Government on enabling education for persons with disabilities within the regular education system and under equal conditions should be enforced in the schools,

so that the schools make arrangements and adjustments for efficient access of persons with disabilities, provision of appropriate materials in the educational process, specific methods of education depending on the type of disability, and training and continuous methodological and expert support for teachers of persons with disabilities.

The general national policy on the education of persons with disabilities should be transferred and enforced at local level as well.

Bearing in mind the communication difficulties of the persons with damaged hearing, and especially of deaf and blind people, maybe it would be best if these persons in the beginning receive their education in special schools or in special classrooms or departments within the regular schools, with a note that the education provided in the special schools should be at the same level as the one in the regular schools.

### **Employment and work**

The state is obliged to create conditions for the persons with disabilities so that they are capable of achieving their human rights, especially with the regard to employment and labour market.

The labour legislation must not contain any provision that discriminates against persons with disabilities concerning their employment. At the same time, the Government should institute support programs on inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market. This support is mainly implemented through appropriate vocational training, giving of favorable credits and grants, as well as certain physical adjustments that should provide an appropriate access to the place of work for the persons with disabilities.

Among the special conditions that need to be provided is the adaptation of the place of work, which should consist of technical adjustments and provision of helping devices depending of the type of disability. Similarly, access should be provided to the different facilities and the communication problems should be resolved with appropriate services.

The state should organise production of helping devices that will enable the productive work of persons with disabilities.

The state should also take actions to raise the awareness of the employers in terms of elimination of the negative attitudes and prejudice concerning the employment of persons with disabilities.

As an employer, the state should create favorable conditions for employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector.

The Government, the organisation of workers and the organisation of employers should work closely in order to provide the persons with disabilities with equal conditions for work as the other people, good earnings and protection at work so that occupational diseases and injuries at work are prevented. In case of some workers getting sick from an occupational disease or injury at work, it is necessary to organise rehabilitation for them and retraining for another job if necessary.

The employment and the work of persons with disabilities should mainly be achieved on the open labour market, and only exceptionally in small sheltered workshops.

The programs for retraining need to include persons with disabilities in order to increase their flexibility with regard to employment.

In addition to the consultations with the organisations of workers and with the organisations of employers, the state is obliged to consult with the organisations of persons with disabilities with reference to the increase in their employment and productive work.

### **Making of income and social security**

The Government is obliged to provide support in the achievement of income and social security for the persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities make their living mostly through their salary from the work.

Certain benefits beyond the work can be achieved on the basis of social security, for example of disease, invalidity, age etc.

The state must not allow any discrimination or exclusion of the disable people with regard to the provisions concerning social insurance, social assistance and social protection.

The state should support the achievement of an income by a person that takes care of a person with disabilities.

The social insurance, especially disability insurance, should always be focused on establishing or renewing of the earning ability of persons with disabilities, so that they could be able to make their living within the earned salary. The earning ability is often renewed or established through the system of vocational training as well.

The benefits based on social insurance (disability insurance) need to be achieved until the establishing of the earning ability. If necessary, the same applies for the compensation of expenses for accommodation into an appropriate institution.

For persons with disabilities who have been waiting for employment long, vocational retraining can be organised if necessary.

In the case of private ownership, the state needs to encourage the local community, the families of persons with disabilities, their organisations and the Centers for Social Work to develop social programs and take measures for stimulation of employment of persons with disabilities.

## **S o c i a l   p r o t e c t i o n**

Protection of people with severe, profound mental disability and with a multiple disability.

For the persons with severe and profound mental disability, as well as for those with multiple disability, who need to be stationed into social welfare institutions, efforts need to be made so that those institutions be with a smaller capacity, and closer to the families of these people (small capacity homes providing various services to the beneficiaries, flats/houses for small groups and individual accommodation in other families).

On the basis of this orientation, it will be necessary to start a process of reorganisation and reform of the Special Institute in Demir Kapija, i.e. to start a process of de-

institutionalisation, improvement of the living and treatment conditions in this institution in accordance with the best practice in the European countries.

### **Protection and treatment of children with autism and cerebral palsy**

Bearing in mind that nothing has been done so far for the children with autism and cerebral palsy in our country, at first there is a need for making appropriate decisions by the relevant institutions for organisation of an appropriate treatment for these children, in terms of opening daily centers for them. This step will meet the need and the requirements of a large number of parents in the near future.

### **Housing**

The state is obliged to provide a legislative and institutional framework for housing of persons with disabilities. The legislation regulating the housing of persons with disabilities needs to contain criteria and conditions about which persons, with which type and severity of disability, will be eligible for obtaining flats for use or credits/grants for buying flats.

### **Cultural/social life**

The state should make sure that persons with disabilities could be involved both as authors and users of cultural events.

All creative artistic and intellectual capacities of the persons with disabilities need to be realised both for personal interest and for the interest of the whole community.

The institutions should enable unobstructed visits of persons with disabilities to cultural events in theatres, museums, cinemas and libraries. The libraries are of particular importance at all educational levels with regard to the supply of reference literature for various occupations and belletristic.

In order for persons with disabilities to be able to use cultural facilities, it is necessary to build an appropriate access to these places for them, and at the same time, the cultural contents need to be built in media that are available for these people.



## **Sport and recreation**

Sport and recreation expressed through body exercises are of great importance in the process of rehabilitation and improvement of the health of persons with disabilities and for their active involvement in the society and economy. Irrespective of the type and degree of invalidity and whether the reasons for it are congenital or acquired, persons with disabilities are more or less exposed to long sitting or laying in bed and physical inactivity. If this physical inactivity lasts for a long period of time it will result into further decrease or complete loss of the remaining physical capacities especially in the young people in whom the body development is not completed yet. The increased degree of automation in the process of work makes the people sit for long hours in a usually unfavorable static position, which has a very negative impact on persons with disabilities. This situation can bring about some body deformations in addition to the existing disability unless some physical activities in terms of exercises, sports and recreation are taken up. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to start with sports, recreation and rehabilitation as soon as possible and to enable the person with disabilities to improve, through a programmed training process, his/her health situation, to rehabilitate and socialise and become a useful member of the community.

If it is true that everybody needs sports and recreation, sports, in the true sense of the word, is taken up by some persons with disabilities who show certain preferences and good results in some individual sports. If they fulfill the strict criteria set by the International Paraolympic Committee in one of the various sports on the agenda of the summer and Winter Paraolympic Games, they get an opportunity to represent their country in the big sports events. This explains the reason why the state should create appropriate conditions for sport and recreation for persons with disabilities.

## **Religion**

Persons with disabilities can practice their religion according to their personal choice and interest, without being discriminated on disability grounds. Information on religious matters should be available for these people through media that correspond to the abilities of the persons with disabilities.

## **Information and research**

The state should insure existence of provisions at legislative level that, when collecting statistical data or conducting census, provide for identification of the different groups of persons with disabilities, and for collection of relevant data on the personal, family, social, educational and economic status of these people.

A database needs to exist at institutional level. This information should refer to the overall living conditions of the people with different disabilities.

It is necessary, of course, to guarantee the confidentiality of the data.

It is necessary to unify the terminology with regard to the different relevant data on the different groups of persons with disabilities. In this way, carrying out services on the specific and actual needs in various living areas will be made possible. After one has learnt about the living standard and a family status of persons with disabilities as well as about the influence of different social and economic factors on them, it is possible to draw up programs for changing of the actual situation to the better. When surveying the reasons for the negative living conditions and when drawing up programs for their improvement, it is necessary to include competent persons with disabilities in this process.

It is necessary to enable exchange of the results obtained from the survey and the information collected by the institutions of the system and the organisations of persons with disabilities. This dissemination of data should take place both at national and local level.

## **Economic policy**

When carrying out its economic policy, the state should assume a full financial responsibility, for creating an appropriate environment for equal participation of the persons with disabilities. Legal, institutional and program aspects overlap during the implementation of these processes. So, when passing laws and establishing the systems of social insurance, welfare assistance and social protection, the state should make sure that it includes the needs of the persons with disabilities in the budget appropriately, and at

the same time to provide for subvention to the salary when necessary and for exemption from duties.

The giving of loans and the use of funds should support projects and measures which meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities in the most sufficient way. There is an obvious need for existence of special funds, which will finance certain pilot projects.

### **Creation of policies and planning**

It is necessary to study the existing legislation from a normative and legal aspect, and to identify the possibilities for creation of policies concerning persons with disabilities in all areas of life.

From an institutional point of view, the state, i.e. its relevant Ministries need to develop policies in their relevant areas. At the same time, they need to plan the activities that are needed for implementation of these policies. The Ministries always include the organisations of persons with disabilities in this process.

The creation of policies, the planning and the development of specific programs need to be guided by the needs of the whole population. In addition to the state, all other relevant institutions, such as the funds and the public companies, need to get involved.

One should help in the creation of policies and in the planning at national, regional and local level, through development of manuals and training of the personal.

### **L a w s**

All aspects in this area are manifested as normative and legal.

When passing law sand determining the rights and the responsibilities of the citizens, the state should make sure that the rights and the responsibilities of persons with disabilities are regulated, especially their human rights (civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights). The state should also involve the organisations of persons with disabilities to say their opinion when laws are being passed.

When passing laws, the state should strictly go by the principle of non-discrimination against persons with disabilities.

The regulation of issues that refer to specific needs of these people, can be done when passing laws that apply to all citizens, by passing special laws or by including special chapters in the laws.

The state can provide for special legal mechanisms for protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. In this respect there is an interesting idea of establishing the institution of Ombudsman for the rights of persons with disabilities.

### **Coordination of the work**

The state is obliged to establish and reinforce the National Coordination Body, as a national focal point concerning the issue of persons with disabilities.

The National Coordination Body is established on a permanent basis and with a decision of the Government. The National Coordination Body should be composed of representatives from a variety of sectors and disciplines. This can be achieved in such a way that the Government appoints several experts from several Ministries, as well as representatives from the organisations of persons with disabilities.

The organisations of persons with disabilities send proposals to the National Coordination Body.

The Government provides the relative autonomy of the National Coordination Body, by financing it and providing its communication with the governmental bodies. The National Coordination Body has the right to submit proposals and opinions to the relevant Ministries and to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as to the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and to the President of the Republic of Macedonia.

This body should also carry out the evaluation or should participate in the evaluation of projects that deal with persons with disabilities in the Republic of Macedonia.

The National Coordination Body submits a report on its work to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

## **Organisations of persons with disabilities**

The state is obliged to help the establishing of organisations of persons with disabilities. It also needs to allow them to play an advisory role.

The functioning of the organisations is secured by the permanent financing provided by the state. The advisory role of the organisations of persons with disabilities can be achieved in such a way that they should be given the chance to say their opinion at national, regional and local level concerning issues of persons with disabilities. The state needs to make sure that this communication is permanent. The organisations of persons with disabilities should be given the chance to identify the specific needs and priorities, to say their opinion about the different plans, and to participate in the evaluation of various projects that refer to persons with disabilities. These organisations should have representatives in the National Coordination Body

## **Assessment of the programs on persons with disabilities.**

The state should conduct periodic and systematic assessments of the programs on persons with disabilities. This assessment should be based on a unified terminology and on developed criteria for development of these programs. The organisations of persons with disabilities should be involved in the development of the terminology and of the criteria. In order to avoid autarchy it is necessary to study the examples of the good international practice when implementing and assessing the programs on persons with disabilities, which should enable implementation of one's criteria and development of the existing standards. It is preferable that the National Coordination Body takes active part in these processes.

The implementation of the programs in different areas means in practical terms implementation of the policies on persons with disabilities in the different areas of life. In order for the goals of these policies to be achieved the use of developed standards and criteria is needed since the earliest phase which is the phase of planning.

## **Professional staff for persons with disabilities**

At the present moment we can say that we are satisfied with the professional staff we have for work with persons with disabilities (special education teachers, psychologists, pedagogues, social workers, instructors etc), taking into account the fact that there are higher education institutions for pre-service training of such staff. However, there is a need for additional in-service training and information, especially through learning about and using the experience of the countries with more developed systems.

It is necessary to focus on the staff from the regular educational institutions who work with children with disabilities. Teachers and other professionals working in kindergartens, regular schools and other institutions that take care of such children have not been trained for work with them. In the previous period (except in five – six schools included in the Project on Integration), nothing has been undertaken to help the teachers, and even things that existed were canceled.

Since the existing staff working in preschool institutions and in schools is not familiar with the issue of children with disabilities, the relevant institutions will need to organise seminars, counseling and other training for these professionals.

## **I n t e r n a t i o n a l   c o o p e r a t i o n**

The Republic of Macedonia should incorporate the issues referring to persons with disabilities in its cooperation with the UN agencies. Similarly, our state should do the same within the cooperation with other countries and international organisations.

Our state should enable the following:

- exchange of knowledge and information among the NGOs,
- dissemination of the research outcomes,
- sharing of the acquired knowledge and of the research results with organisations of persons with disabilities and with national coordination commissions.

Our state should encourage the functioning of the global and regional organisations of persons with disabilities in its cooperation with the UN and with the Governments and Parliaments of other countries.

Our state should insist that UNICEF, UNESCO and UNDP incorporate in their programs aspects referring to persons with disabilities.

Similarly, such aspects need to be included when establishing and while implementing developmental programs that arise from the bilateral and multilateral cooperation, especially from the cooperation with the EU.

### **Monitoring of the implementation of the National Strategy on Achieving Equal Rights for the Persons with Disabilities**

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia assigns responsibility for undertaking measures, within their legal authorisations, for implementation of this strategy to all relevant Ministries.

The relevant Ministries are obliged to submit a Report on the measures undertaken in the implementation of this strategy to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and to the National Coordination Body at least once in two years. This strategy was developed by the working group appointed by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Mr. Bedredin Ibraimi.

The group is composed by:

**Borislav Batic**, Institute for Social Activities – Skopje, President \_\_\_\_\_

**Boge Cadinovski**, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Member \_\_\_\_\_

**Mladica Kotevska**, Director of the Institute for Social Activities, Member \_\_\_\_\_

**Ljupco Efremov**, President and Member of the Council of the Union of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, Member \_\_\_\_\_

**Vele Dimovski**, Member of the Council of the Union of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, Member \_\_\_\_\_

Prof. Ph.D. **Ljupco Ajdinski**, Faculty of Philosophy, Member \_\_\_\_\_