



STATEMENT

ON THE CHANGES IN THE LAW FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (LPD)

The law for people with disabilities needs serious amendments and additions, but in a completely different direction from the one proposed. Although new in date, its claims to reform - in philosophy and practice - are greatly exaggerated. Moreover, the current law repeats all the disadvantages of the previous law and does not comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The draft amendment to the LPD does not correct the existing deficits of the law.

1. Contrary to the recommendations addressed to the Bulgarian government by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the effect of the individual assessment is limited to determining the hours of personal assistance, the need to adapt housing and car. The remaining benefits under the LPD - monthly financial support, technical aids, and balneotherapy - are provided based on the decision of the MLEC (Medical-Labor Expert Committee) and the requirement for individual assessment is dropped for them. If the UN Convention is read carefully, an individual needs assessment must become a key factor in supporting people with disabilities. Meaningful changes in the Law should limit the effect of MLEC decisions and strengthen the functions of individual assessment, which is the exact opposite of what is currently proposed. Medical expertise has its place for social security purposes, while support for social inclusion must be based on the individual needs of each person with a disability.
2. The transfer of responsibilities and financing of technical aids and medical devices to the Ministry of Health and the NHIF (National Health Insurance Fund) is not substantiated with goals, evidence, and motives. It is said that this activity requires more medical knowledge and less social knowledge. This statement is false for several reasons: (a) these funds are provided for socialization and active living of people who have permanent damage as a result of a past illness but are not ill. This activity is multidisciplinary and for the most part has a technical and social character, far less is the medical part. The profession that deals with these issues is called occupational therapy and occupational therapists are already being trained in Bulgaria - there is a master's program at the Technical University in Ruse, and perhaps elsewhere; and (b) The provision of technical aids to people with disabilities requires serious rethinking and changes, but they are not in the direction we offer. In the times of constantly evolving technologies and the digitalization of more and more spheres of life, it is completely incomprehensible to limit the available technical aids and medical devices to a finite number of items with limited prices. It is extremely unacceptable to make such serious amendments without evidence of their necessity and without an assessment of the effect they will have on the various public systems and users, in this case, people with disabilities. The UN Committee recommends that the Bulgarian government update its disability policies to ensure the mobility of people with disabilities and facilitate their access to technical aids by reforming the system for providing them. The proposed

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changes do not meet the recommendation and do not imply positive changes for people with disabilities

3. The proposed postponement of the restructuring of the Agency for People with Disabilities is unacceptable because it contradicts the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as good public policy practices (in this case on disability) based on reliable information, analysis and evidence of their appropriateness. The abolition of the Agency's obligations to collect information, make analyzes, and provide them for the political process is extremely unacceptable from any point of view, especially in times of limited public resources, deepening financial crisis, and social inequalities.

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This document was created with the financial support of the Active Citizens Fund of Bulgaria under the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area. The entire responsibility for the content of the document lies with the Center for Independent Living and under no circumstances can it be assumed that this document reflects the official opinion of the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area and the Operator of the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria.