

## **Contribution to UPR Report on Serbia**

### **National Organization of Persons with Disabilities of Serbia- joint contribution- Republic of Serbia- Rights of Persons with Disabilities- July 2008**

*Key words: Human rights of person with disabilities, full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in Serbia's society, prevention of disability- based discrimination*

**National Organization of Persons with Disabilities of Serbia**

**Address: Dimitrije Tucovic St. 23, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia**

**Phone: +381 11 2455 184**

**E-mail: [savezmd@bycom.net](mailto:savezmd@bycom.net)**

**Contact persons : Ms Ivanka Jovanovic, Executive Director**

**1. National Organization of Persons with Disabilities of Serbia NOOIS** is a coalition of NGO's of persons with disabilities. It is the Union of 14 national organizations of the persons with individual types of disabilities, the organizations of legal representatives of persons with disabilities and the interest organizations gathering persons with different types of disabilities (cross- disability organizations) organized for the territory of the Republic of Serbia. It was established on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2007 as the organization of special social interest with the legal status. It represents the united movement of persons with disabilities of Serbia, speaking in the name of most persons with disabilities, implying the most important political strength in advocating their common interests and needs.

**2. NOOIS' mission** is to increase inclusion of persons with disabilities in society, promoting full respect of human rights and non-discrimination based on disability, through partnership of the unified disability movement and the national public authorities of Serbia in adopting and implementing the disability Laws and other documents, in compliance with the international standards and documents.

**3. Aims of NOOIS** include advocating for the interests of persons with disabilities in Serbia, protection and promotion of their basic human rights, struggle against prejudice and discrimination based on disability and full participation, equality and social inclusion of persons with disabilities, acceptance of international and European disability standards, principles and documents and their application in Serbia, advancing the status of persons with disabilities, including the application of National disability strategy and policy and the reform of national laws.

4. Serbia adopted a new Constitution in November 2006. The Constitution, *inter alia*, explicitly prohibits discrimination on basis of physical and intellectual disability (clause 3 of article 21), thus providing for realization of articles 2 of Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Special measures that Republic of Serbia may introduce to achieve equality of groups of persons that are not in equal position to the other citizens shall not be considered discrimination (clause 4 of article 21). This clause provides constitutional basis for

affirmative action measures aimed at achieving equality of persons with disabilities, such as specialized transport, various benefits and quota system in the field of employment. Clause 5 of article 60 of Constitution guarantees special conditions of work and special protection at work to persons with disabilities. Constitution also guarantees special protection to persons with disabilities (clause 4 of article 69).

5. In April 2006 the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities.<sup>1</sup> The Law prescribes for a general regime of prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability, particular cases of forbidden discrimination against persons with disabilities, procedures for the protection of persons who have been victims of discrimination and measures that state and local authorities must take in order to promote and encourage equality and social inclusion of persons with disabilities (article 1.).

6. The Law prohibits direct discrimination and defines it as consisting of acts of placing a person in a less favourable position, or creating the possibility of placing a person in a less favourable position than persons in the same or similar situation, due to that person's disability or for reasons pertaining to disability (clause 2 of article 6).

7. Moreover, the Law prohibits indirect discrimination. Indirect discrimination occurs when a person or a group are put in a less favourable position on the basis of disability or reasons pertaining to it through the adoption of an act or by carrying out an action that is seemingly based on principle of equality and non-discrimination, unless the act or action is justified by a legitimate cause and means for realization of that cause are appropriate and necessary (clause 3 of article 6). This is highly significant provision as persons with disabilities face indirect discrimination more often in practice. The Law provides protection to victims of discrimination who are victimised because they requested or intend to request protection from past discrimination, or have offered or intend to offer proof of discrimination (sub-paragraph 1 of clause 4 of article 6).

8. The Law prescribes that the principle of equality of rights and duties is violated when a person is unjustifiably denied his or her rights, or rights are being imposed on him or her solely or predominantly on the basis of disability or reasons pertaining to it. If rights are not denied, or imposed to other persons in same or similar situation, the reasons or consequences are not justifiable and there is no proportion between measures taken and aim that has to be realized (article 7). In article 8, the Law prescribes that the adoption of provisions of legislation, decisions or specific measures aimed at the improvement of the status of persons with disabilities, their families and organizations, providing special support needed for the realization of their rights under conditions of equality shall not be considered discrimination (clause 1). Furthermore, it shall not be considered discrimination to adopt or maintain measures and acts aimed at improving or eliminating the unfavourable situation in which persons with disabilities live.

9. Discrimination is prohibited in the following areas: Public authority proceedings (art. 11), participation and membership in civic associations (art. 12), access to public buildings, places and services (arts 13 to 16), access to public transport (arts 27 to 29),

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Official Gazette of Republic of Serbia" No 33/ 2006.

health care (art. 17), education (arts 18 to 20), employment and labour relations (articles 21 to 26), family and marital relations (art. 30). The Law also prohibits the discrimination of organizations of persons with disabilities in the processes of applying for public funding (art. 31).

10. The Law first provides a list of actions, omissions or other acts that constitute discrimination on the basis of disability in the above-mentioned areas. It also prescribes for cases of severe discrimination in particular areas (articles 11, 15, 17, 20, 26 and 29). Predominantly, these acts are manifested through harassment, insults and abuse of persons with disabilities who are victims of discrimination. The sole exception is discrimination in provision of health care (art. 17). Here the Law provides that, due to vital significance of health care and the possibly severe consequences of failure to provide health care to persons with disabilities, any discrimination in the provision of health care constitutes a severe case of discrimination in and of itself. Finally, the Law provides for acts that shall not constitute cases of discrimination in particular areas of social life (articles 12, 14, 19, 23, 25, 28 and 30).

11. Part 4 of the Law prescribes the measures for promoting equality of persons with disabilities. The proposed measures were drafted and based on the UN Standard Rules for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, thus implementing the General Comment No 5. to Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Measures are guidelines and minimum standards that need to be further elaborated in specific legislation regulating social protection, compensatory rights, urban planning and construction, transport and telecommunication, procedural laws, education, culture and sports, and other relevant laws and regulations.

12. Serbia's Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities prescribes for litigations in civic procedures in cases of discrimination on the grounds of disabilities in Part 5. The proceedings are initiated by a complaint lodged by the individual with disabilities claiming to have been a victim of discrimination, or that person's legal representative. Unfortunately, proposal to authorize organizations of persons with disabilities to initiate judicial proceedings on behalf of their members was not accepted. This may be 1 of the main reasons why there had been relatively few judicial proceedings for disability-based discrimination. The other reason could be lack of awareness on disability-based discrimination amongst the judiciary, as well, to a lesser degree, amongst persons with disabilities themselves. Proposal to shift the burden of proof in civic procedures from plaintiff to defendant, as it is the case under European Union 2000/78/ EC Directive, wasn't accepted either. *Law should be amended to include those provisions, and awareness on Law has to be further raised, both amongst judiciary, public servants and persons with disabilities.*

13. Article 43 of the Law prescribes that the plaintiff may request the prohibition of carrying out an act that would constitute discrimination and they may request for the cessation of continual or repeated acts of discrimination (clause 1), the removal of consequences of discrimination (clause 2), the declaration that the defendant carried out an act of discrimination (clause 3) and compensation of material and moral damages (clause 4). Articles 46 – 52 prescribe fines for perpetrators of discrimination

in the following areas: membership in civic associations, provision of public services, health care, education and public transport.

14. According to data of Ministry of Justice from November 2007, 5 complaints had been submitted to courts under the Law on Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities until that moment. One case in municipal court in city of Sabac has been concluded with court's adjudication in favour of plaintiff, a blind person demanding his disability allowance to be transferred to his banking account instead of home delivery in cash. Local centre for social welfare claimed that they are acting in "the best interest of plaintiff" and that "positive discrimination is permissible under the Law". Plaintiff sued Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as it is centre for social welfare's superior. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' Department for Persons with Disabilities sent an interpretative statement to the court to the effect that positive discrimination is not permissible, that Law has been violated, even though Ministry itself was the defendant, thus demonstrating high regard for rule of law and respect for human rights. As a consequence of the court adjudication, few months later centres for social welfare in Serbia commenced sending written enquiries to their users, asking them how they want their disability allowances to be paid, by home delivery in cash, or by transfer to a banking account. Four other court cases on complaints for disability- based discrimination are currently pending.

15. In regards to right to life, liberty and security of person, in summer of 2006 the public was alarmed at death of 3 residents of psychiatric ward in Belgrade. Preliminary investigation showed that they had been killed by another inmate, who passed away before the ending of the official investigation of public prosecutor's office. The director of ward has been revoked and authorities continued to investigate the case.

16. Mental Disability Rights International's report on situation of children in institutions for persons with mental and intellectual conditions in Serbia from fall of 2007 also caused quite a stir in public. Even though report itself has not been prepared in accordance with the standards for reporting to international human rights institutions as it was prepared without any contacts with the competent national authorities and presented to the public before even informing the authorities about its' existence, Serbia's Government decided to investigate all alleged violations of human rights in institutions immediately after the report had been published. After the review of the situation in institutions it was concluded that living conditions are far from satisfactory, even if the most drastic allegations were not confirmed in the moment of extraordinary inspections. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will take measures to enable moving children from institutions into smaller settings, foster homes and not to take new residents in the institutions that have poorest conditions. It is worth a while to note that organizations of persons with disabilities through pilot projects funded by Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, some local authorities and international donors, try to develop framework and social services that will enable persons with disabilities to live in their communities instead of institutions, by setting up small community supported housing, day- care centres and personal assistant service. In fall of 2007 Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with the support of DFID, prepared standards for number of social services, including day- care centres. Additionally, Serbian organization of persons with disabilities, Centre for Independent Living, developed standards for service of personal assistance, with support of UNDP and

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' Fund for Social Innovations. All various social support services for persons with disabilities should be included in the system of social protection and care through amendments of legislation in 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2008.

17. Law on Health Care from 2005 *inter alia* provides for protection from forced medical experimentation: Patients can be subjected to experimental treatments only with their free and informed consent. However, Law provides for possibility that legal guardians of children and adults whose legal capacity had been limited can give free and informed consent for experimental medical treatments. *Within the framework of harmonization of Serbia's legislation with provisions of Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Serbia's disability movement proposed to amend Law on Health Care and revoke the provision that currently enables legal guardians to give consent to experimental medical treatment on behalf of their protégées.*

18. One can regard accessibility as a pre- condition for freedom of movement of persons with disabilities. Law on Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities provides for accessibility of objects of public interest and public pathways, parks etc. Amendments to Law on Construction and Planning from April 2006 provide for mandatory application of accessibility standards to all new public objects and fines for those who fail to implement standards. After the initiative of Serbia's disability movement and Department for Persons with Disabilities, Serbia's Government started using National Investment Fund to invest in adaptations of public buildings. Nevertheless, removal of architectural barriers is not yet sufficiently systematic and many objects opened to public remain inaccessible.

19. In regards to freedom of expression Law on Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities prescribes that authorities have to put effort into making information and communication accessible for persons with disabilities. Ministry of Culture issued guidelines on how to make electronic media accessible but only few TV stations with national broadcasting frequencies adhere to it fully. Even national public TV failed to fully implement it, though some information programs are subtitled and each day 1 News program is broadcasted with sign language interpretation. In December 2007 Department for Persons with Disabilities initiated adaptation of Internet sites of number of ministries so blind persons can access it. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' site is accessible, as few others. *In May 2008 Department for Persons with Disabilities set up a working group in co- operation with the Deaf Union of Serbia in order to commence drafting the Law on Use of Serbian Sign Language. The group should finish the draft until the end of 2008.*

20. In 2004 amendments to Law on Election of MP's provided possibility for persons with disabilities to cast their vote in a sealed envelope that is delivered to members of local election board, ensuring secrecy of vote, if voting station is not accessible. Since 2004 this rule was applied to Presidential and elections for local authorities as well, thus providing an opportunity to persons with disabilities to participate in conduct of public affairs and political life of country. However, most voting stations remain inaccessible. *Electoral laws should also be amended to enable persons with disabilities living in residential institutions to exercise their right to vote in cases when they are still registered in places they lived prior to moving to institution.* Still, over the past few years persons with disabilities take more active role in political life in Serbia, some got elected to Parliament as MP's or to municipal halls as councilors.

The Government of Serbia, especially Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, included representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities in their working groups that drafted various legislation and strategic policy documents.

21. In regards to right to work, the 2005 Labor Law explicitly prohibits discrimination on grounds of disability (article 18). Persons with disabilities are to be employed under general conditions, unless law prescribes otherwise. Fiscal laws provide for tax exemption on wages for employers that hire a person with disabilities for the period of 3 years. Over the past few years ministry in charge of employment prepared number of drafts of Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, however Parliament still has not adopted that law. In 2006 group of experts engaged by Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Affairs, supported by EAR, prepared feasibility study of reform of employment of persons with disabilities. Many recommendations from the study served as basis for subsequent drafting of Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities. In the meantime, Poverty Reduction Strategy recognized persons with disabilities as one of socially vulnerable groups with low employment rate- only 13% of persons with disabilities in Serbia are employed at labor market. It provided measures for promoting employment of persons with disabilities. National Employment Strategy also includes measures for promoting employment of persons with disabilities. The National Employment Service provides incentives to employers that hire persons with disabilities, funds for adaptation of the working place as well as 1- year wages subsidy. An employer is obliged to make technical adaptations of the workplace on condition that the adaptations expenses are not born by the employer or are proportional to the profit which the employer can realize by employing person with disability (Article 22 of Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities). The denial to make an adaptation represents an act of discrimination.

22. According to National Employment Service statistics, some 25000 persons with disabilities are registered as unemployed. In 2006, National Employment Service enabled 328 unemployed persons with disabilities to find jobs, in 2007 that number was 401 persons. *Still, Parliament has to adopt Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities and National Employment Service has to make all its' facilities and programs accessible to persons with disabilities.*

23. Families with disabled children have some benefits, but solely if they qualify for children's allowance under general terms. Parents of children with disabilities can work half- time until their children reach age of 7 under Labor Law, however, they don't get full extent of wages thus they are often reluctant to use this legal opportunity. Furthermore, Law on Social Protection and Provision of Social Security To Citizens of Serbia prescribes that a service beneficiary can be sent to a social protection institution for housing, food, clothing, care and help, as well as education, training for certain working activities, occupational, cultural and recreational rehabilitation activities (Article 36).<sup>2</sup> Law prescribes that "children with mild, moderate and severe mental deficiencies, multi-deficiencies, children with autism, the children with developmental physical disorder who are not able to stay in their family (...), adults with physical and sensory impairments, the persons with difficult chronic

---

<sup>2</sup> "Official Gazette of Serbia", No. 36/91, 79/91, 33/93, 53/93, 67/93, 46/94, 48/94, 52/96, 29/2001, 84/2004, 115/2005.

diseases and persons with mental disorders who are not able to live in their families independently..." (Article 37) have a right to accommodation in the institution. Even though the Law prescribes that the centers for social work are obligated to examine the conditions for accommodation of potential beneficiaries out of institutions, until the beginning of the new millennium the common practice in Serbia was placing persons with disabilities in institutions, even placing young persons with physical disabilities in nursing homes for old people, or placing persons with intellectual disability in the mental health institutions with persons with psychosocial impairments. The total number of institutions for long-term housing of persons with disabilities in Serbia is 20. Out of the above-mentioned 20 institutions, 9 of them are for long-term housing of children and youngsters with disabilities.

24. There are 11 institutions that house exclusively adults with disabilities: 2 house persons with physical disabilities, 2 house persons with psycho-social disabilities, 1 houses persons with visual impairments and 6 house persons with intellectual disabilities.

25. The total number of residents of 11 above-mentioned institutions that house adults with disabilities in Serbia is 2895.

26. The total number of residents of 20 above-mentioned institutions that house persons with disabilities in Serbia is 5365, including adults, children and youngsters.

27. Within the framework of reform of system of social security, Serbia prepared standards for social services, including services such as day-care centers and personal assistant service that so far had a limited number of user and only had been funded through pilot projects supported by ministry in charge of social affairs and various international donors. *Law on Social Protection and Provision of Social Security to Citizens of Serbia has to be amended in order to introduce new support services such as personal assistance or supported living in small housing communities into system.*

28. Law on Health Care of Serbia is based on the principles of accessible health care and equalization i.e. non-discrimination in provision of health care. The Law prescribes that health care must be physically, economically and geographically accessible to the citizens of the Republic of Serbia, especially the primary health care (Article 19). Discrimination in providing health services, among other things, based on psychological and physical disability is prohibited (Article 20). Nevertheless, many hospitals are inaccessible to wheelchair users, while a deaf person, who wants to use the services of a sign language interpreter when visiting a health institution, must pay for it by himself/herself.

29. The National Investment Plan in 2006 prescribes that all health centers in Serbia should be adapted in accordance with the accessibility standards, which would be a significant step towards the provision of the legally guaranteed accessibility of the primary health care to persons with disabilities.

30. Article 34 of the Law on Health Insurance of the Republic of Serbia prescribes that the rights to health protection, among other things, also includes medical technical devices: prosthesis, orthosis and other orthopaedic equipment for walking, standing and sitting, for sight, hearing, speech, dental devices and other aids. Article

44 of the Law on Health Insurance of Serbia prescribes that the mandatory insurance covers 100 percent costs for medical check-ups, treatment and rehabilitation in case of an injury and illnesses of persons who have severe mental or physical disorder. The insurance also covers costs of medical check-ups and treatment of multiple sclerosis, progressive neuro-muscular diseases, cerebral palsy, paraplegia and quadriplegia, as well as costs of the medical-technical equipment relating to the treatment of the injuries from the Paragraph 1 of this Article. This Article prescribes the coverage of at least 80 percent of the price of health services, among other things, for house treatment and rehabilitation in an institution. Article 50 prescribes that the full health care, without participation, should be provided to disabled war veterans and civil war victims, blind persons, permanently disabled persons or persons who have realized the right to the allowance of other person's care and assistance.

31. The criteria and process for realisation of the right to auxiliary equipment are further prescribed by the Regulation on Medical and Technical Aids Funded from the Resources of the Mandatory Health Insurance. *However, this by-law has made the conditions for realisation of the right to auxiliary equipment stricter and in practice persons with disabilities face numerous difficulties in realisation of the right guaranteed by the law, thus amendments to this regulation are necessary.*

32. The Law on Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities prescribes that denying health treatment to persons with disabilities, or establishing special conditions for providing these services, which are not justified by medical reasons, refusing to make diagnosis or non-providing information of a persons with disability's health condition, represent particularly serious acts of discrimination (Article 17).

33. In regards to implementation of provisions of Convention on Rights of Child, especially article 23, children with disabilities in Serbia and their families still face lack of adequate support services, as described above. Nevertheless, organizations of persons with disabilities in co- operation with municipal authorities and ministry competent for social protection run dozens of day- care centers for children with disabilities, as pilot project, sometimes supported by international donors.

34. Situation in 9 institutions for permanent residence of children with disabilities is far from satisfactory. Out of those 9 institutions for children and youngsters with disabilities, 8 are for children and youngsters with intellectual disabilities and 1 is for children and youngsters with autism. Out of the above-mentioned 8 institutions, 4 of them provide the housing for children as well as for adults with intellectual disabilities but in the separate parts of the institutions. In these 9 institutions there are 2470 children and youngsters with disabilities at the moment.

35. Serbia's legislation on primary and secondary education regulates the right of children with disabilities primarily from the perspective of special education.

36. Ministry of education has the complete data on children with disabilities in the system of pre-school education only for children attending special development groups in the mainstream pre-school institutions: during 2003/4, 200 children with disabilities attended special development groups in 37 pre-school institutions in Serbia. Out of this number, 14 institutions with 100 children were located in Belgrade.



The Ministry does not have the data on children with disabilities who are integrated in the mainstream peer groups in pre-school institutions.

37. As far as the elementary education is concerned, Ministry of Education has the complete data on children with disabilities who attend special schools and the special classes in mainstream schools, while it has only the incomplete, partial data on the number of children with disabilities who attend mainstream schools. Ministry of Education stated that 7,560 children with disabilities attended 51 special schools, while 1,374 children with disabilities attended special classes in mainstream schools in 2000/2001. According to the sample of 97 mainstream schools, it is determined that 8,099 pupils with disabilities attend mainstream classes in these schools.

38. According to the data of Ministry of Education, in 2005 the special classes for children with disabilities existed in 218 mainstream elementary schools in Serbia.

39. Out of 51 special schools in Serbia, 37 schools are for children with mild intellectual disabilities, 8 for children with hearing impairment, 3 for children with sight impairment, 2 for children with physical disabilities and 2 for children with behavioral disorders.

40. As far as the mainstream schools are concerned, there are 11 special classes for youngsters with disabilities.

41. According to Ministry of Education, most of the children with disabilities who attend classes of mainstream schools are the children with milder intellectual and sensory disabilities, with dyslexia and similar forms of disabilities, and with physical disabilities. However, the children and youngsters with disabilities who attend mainstream classes in mainstream schools practically do not enjoy any systematic support. Children and youngsters with physical and sensory disabilities who try to attend mainstream schools face the obstacles almost impossible to be overcome: Over 90 percent of mainstream elementary and secondary schools are inaccessible, the literature in accessible formats almost do not exist in these schools. Furthermore, there is lack of systematic approach to individualized working mainstream schools. *Legislation on pre- school, primary and secondary education has to be amended in order to provide equal opportunities and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities within a mainstream education system that is inclusive.*

42. Situation for disabled students in university education in Serbia is somewhat better: According to the Law on Higher Education, founder of educational institution is obliged to finance the conditions for students with disabilities to study (Para 13, Article 59). The Law on Higher Education also prescribes a possibility of taking examinations alternatively which do not interfere in the essence of the exam itself (Para 10, Article 90) and organizing classes in Sign language (Para 4, Article 80).

43. In practice, these law provisions are not implemented consistently. The systematical efforts aimed at making the University campus accessible have been done only in Novi Sad. In addition to this, an officer for students with disabilities has also been employed within the students' services in this town. Still, National Investment Fund will support a project of adaptation of 40 faculty buildings in universities of Belgrade, Kragujevac and Nis, and Belgrade University set up

specialized support unit for students with disabilities, that had been developed in partnership with Association of Disabled Students. Ministry of Education and City of Belgrade offer scholarships to students with disabilities, last year 150 such students received scholarship in Belgrade

44. Women with disabilities often face double discrimination. In the context of implementation of provisions of Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, it is necessary to note that women with disabilities in some cases face violence. Since 1996 DPO put lot of effort into promotion of status, rights and potentials of women and girls with disabilities, as well as their protection against violence. Several DPOs developed cooperation with women's rights groups and organizations, pointing out double discrimination women with disabilities face. Through the network of non-governmental organizations of women, support is provided to women with disability. Activities for self-empowerment of women and girls with disabilities are developed and training for authorities also begun. National Strategy on Elimination of Violence against Women contains appropriate provisions on women and girls with disabilities.

45. There are no legal obstacles towards the realization of the right to the sexual and reproductive health services provided to women with disabilities but in practice, there is a very small number of accessible health institutions and they face prejudice too.

46. Serbia participated actively in process of drafting of Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, first as part of State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and since 2006 as independent state. Serbia and Montenegro was 1 of 27 states to participate in the Working group of Ad Hoc Committee drafting the Convention. Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Serbia's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, in co-operation with disability movement, included legal expert who is a persons with disability into state delegation to Ad Hoc Committee. At the 6<sup>th</sup> session of Ad Hoc Committee Serbia's delegate facilitated informal negotiations on draft article of Convention on accessibility. In March 2006 Belgrade hosted regional consultative meeting organized by UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs DESA. On December 17<sup>th</sup> 2007 Serbia signed Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to it. In January 2008 Department for Persons with Disabilities of Serbia's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs presented the proposal of action plan for harmonizing Serbia's legislation with provisions of the Convention. Department prepared the action plan in co-operation with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Serbia's disability movement, with the support of UNDP CO in Serbia. *Serbia should ratify Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to it by end of 2008 or early 2009.*

47. On December 28<sup>th</sup> 2006 Government of Serbia adopted Strategy for Enhancement of Situation of Persons with Disabilities in Serbia 2007/2015. This document is based on all UN human rights treaties and aims to enable persons with disabilities to fully participate in Serbia's society as equal citizens with all human rights and duties. Action plans for implementation of Strategy are currently being developed.

For National Organization of Persons of Disabilities of Serbia  
Damjan Tatic, Ph. D.