**CONTRIBUTION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BULGARIA TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 8 OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES UNDER HRC RESOLUTION 37/22**

The government of the Republic of Bulgaria would like to convey the following information:

*1. a. With regard to the existence of legislation, policies, plans, strategies or guidelines for changing public attitudes to people with disabilities*

The Action Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria, adopted by the Council of Ministers for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2015 - 2020, sets out a strategic objective 6: “Implementation of Art. 8 "Raising public awareness and changing attitudes to the rights of persons with disabilities under the Convention". In order to achieve this objective, a measure is foreseen to promote the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities among the general public, and responsible authorities are all ministries.

The aforementioned strategic objective includes the following activities:

- Implementation of the developed communication strategy for changing public attitudes towards people with disabilities;

- Organizing and holding a national roundtable on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- Organizing and holding a national conference on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- Presentation of the annual reports on the implementation of this plan to the National Council for the Integration of People with Disabilities (NSIPD)

An operational objective for “Increasing the capacity of employees of different administrations, nationally representative organizations of and for people with disabilities, employers, etc. on the provisions of the Convention." Has also been set out. To this end, measures have been laid down for the organization and holding of seminars for employees of different state and municipal administrations, employers, etc., including human resources specialists, as well as seminars for members of organizations of and for persons with disabilities, etc.

The above activities shall be implemented by all line ministries, secondary budget spending units, the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB), nationally representative organizations of and for persons with disabilities, nationally representative organizations of employers and nationally representative organizations of employees.

Bulgaria implements a National Disability Strategy covering the period 2016-2020, which has been developed in connection with the implementation of national commitments to implement the ratified UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular in pursuit of its strategic objective 8, item 8. 2 of the Action Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria for the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015 - 2020). It states that the full and equal enjoyment of all rights by persons with disabilities is a national priority, requiring an active, focused and coherent policy, as well as bringing together the actions of the relevant authorities, institutions and the active participation of the civil society. Considering the complex and multilateral nature of the measures to guarantee and recognize the full enjoyment of all rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities, a policy in this area is aimed at implementing a long-term integrated approach based on the principles of horizontal impact, which integrates resources in different policies.

The Strategy is a major policy document that sets out the priority goals and measures and aims at improving the quality of life of people with disabilities, preventing discrimination on the basis of "disability", ensuring their full and active participation in all areas of public life and promoting respect of their rights in all policies. The vision of the National Disability Strategy for 2020 is for the Republic of Bulgaria to provide conditions and opportunities for the progressive achievement of the objectives and principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as a guarantee for full participation and the exercise of fundamental rights of persons with disabilities without any discrimination whatsoever on the basis of disability.

The Disabled Persons Act regulates public relations related to the exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Bulgaria and aims to:

- promote, protect and guarantee the full and equitable exercise of the rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities;

- create conditions for social inclusion of people with disabilities;

- promotes respect for the inherent human dignity of people with disabilities;

- provides support for people with disabilities and their families.

The law guarantees the rights of persons with disabilities in a way that ensures respect for their human dignity and equal treatment in their personal, social and political life, by applying an individual approach and individual needs assessment. Its basic principles are:

- personal choice and independence of people with disabilities and their families;

- equality and non-discrimination;

- social inclusion and full and effective participation of people with disabilities and their families in public life;

- accessibility.

According to information from the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) in implementation of the School and Pre-School Education Act (SPEA), the Ordinance on Inclusive Education was adopted. The Ordinance defines the state educational standard for inclusive education. The Ordinance regulates public relations related to the provision of inclusive education for children and students in the system of pre-school and school education, as well as the activity of educational institutions to support the personal development of children and students. The Ordinance regulates the activities for general and additional support according to the individual needs of each child and student and their provision by teachers and other pedagogical specialists (psychologists, pedagogical advisers, speech therapists), as well as by other specialists (social workers, kinesitherapists, etc.).

In 2018, kindergarten educators were trained to work with the screening test and psychomotor, cognitive and language development programs for early detection and prevention of learning disabilities as part of the overall support under SPEA.

An electronic platform can be obtained from the MES website to collect and promote good experience from stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies and measures in the field of inclusive education and the educational integration of children and students from ethnic communities.

The focus of the MES is to reform and modernize special schools and special education support centres. Activities are organized and coordinated to support special schools for children with sensory disabilities and centres for special educational support to implement their new functions to provide additional support for the personal development of children and students with special educational needs. Trainings of directors and pedagogical specialists from special schools and centres for special educational support and numerous workshops were held. Both the Special Education Support Centres and the five special schools mentioned above have qualified specialists in the field of special pedagogy and rehabilitation of children with disabilities. For the children enrolled in them individual plans and programs have been developed and they are trained in subjects from the school curricula in accordance with their individual needs. Therapy, rehabilitation and support of various specialists has been provided: art therapists, speech therapists, psychologists, kinesitherapists and other specialists, as needed.

Many trainings and various qualification activities are being held for pedagogical professionals to enhance their professional competences. Currently, new curricula on special subjects for hearing impaired students have been updated or prepared in order to be able to develop modern textbooks and teaching aids for teaching in these subjects. Schools and centres for support for personal development support the implementation of the state policy for ensuring and providing support for the personal development of children and students by organizing activities for the development of their individual abilities and gifts in the fields of science, technology, arts and sports. They become a place for discovering, developing and expressing the interests and opportunities of students through their involvement in various projects, initiatives, programmes.

In relation to the implementation of Strategic Objective 4.2. "Introduction of Sign Language", from the Action Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria for the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015-2020), and the implementation of the Strategic Objective "Introduction of Sign Language in the Educational System" at the Ministry of Education and Science a Coordination Unit of representatives of organizations of and for hearing impaired people was established. The Coordination Unit assists MES in the implementation of the activities of the Action Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and ensures the participation of non-governmental organizations for the hearing impaired. In addition, this Coordination Unit will discuss written opinions and proposals regarding the sign language, received by the Ministry of Education and Science, and will prepare and submit opinions and make specific proposals.

The Ministry of Education and Science supported the initiative to continue the scientific study of the grammar of the Bulgarian sign language, as well as the approbation in the learning process of a platform for converting speech to text for hearing impaired students.

In order to overcome the limited access to information of the hearing impaired, the Ministry of Education and Science in November 2018 took the initiative to pilot the presentation of sign language in the field of education within three months, which was published on the Facebook page of the Ministry of Education and Science. Currently, this activity is continuing, and we envisage the inclusion of hearing-impaired persons, namely an operator and a gesture translator.

The overall policy of the Ministry of Education and Science is to create conditions for the development of inclusive education as a process of awareness, acceptance and support of the individuality of each child or student by including resources aimed at removing obstacles to studying and learning and to creating opportunities for the development and participation of children and students in all aspects of community life.

*1.b. On the challenges to their implementation:*

The National Strategy outlines the main challenges and priorities, including the promotion of good coordination between different institutions in implementing the mainstreaming policy approach, as well as the activation of municipal and regional authorities. There is still a prevailing attitude to work on individual projects to support people with disabilities, and in the aftermath, solutions to the sustainability of initiatives are difficult to find.

*2.a. On the existence of legislative and policy measures taken to tackle hate crime, hate speech and other practices affecting people with disabilities.*

Bulgarian Criminal Code (CC) regulates the criminal prosecution of hate speech in Articles 162 - 166 of Chapter III "Crimes against the Rights of Citizens" of the Special Part of the Code. Article 162, para. 1 provides for penalties for inciting and preaching discrimination, violence or hatred on the basis of race, nationality or ethnic origin through word, press, or other media. Under paragraph 2 of that article, any act of violence or damage to the property of persons on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnicity, religion or political conviction shall be punished. Paragraph 3 of Article 162 criminalizes the establishment or management of organizations or groups carrying out the activities described in the preceding paragraphs, and paragraph 4 criminalizes membership in such organizations and groups. Article 163 provides for punishment for persons belonging to a crowd assembled to attack groups of the population, individuals or their property in relation to their national, ethnic or racial origin, the punishment being more severe if the mob or some of the participants are armed or in case of attacks resulting in grievous bodily harm or death. Article 164 provides for punishment for persons who preach or incite discrimination, violence or hatred on a religious basis through word, print or other media, through electronic information systems or otherwise. It is clear from the abovementioned regulation that the indication of "harm" is not explicitly included in the texts on the basis of which hate speech is prosecuted through criminal law.

*2.b. – Are there legal measures in practice in cases where people with disabilities seek compensation?*

At the same time, according to Art. 54 of the Criminal Code, the court determines the punishment within the limits provided by the law for the committed crime, guided by the provisions of the general part of the Code and taking into account the degree of public danger of the act and the perpetrator, the motives for committing the act and other guilt mitigating and aggravating circumstances. Although no qualified composition is provided for in the Criminal Code in cases where the offenses are committed due to hatred based on "disability", this character can be taken into account as an aggravating circumstance in determining the sentence.

It should be borne in mind that the character of "disability" is included among the characters in Art. 4 of the Anti-Discrimination Act, on the basis of which any direct or indirect discrimination is prohibited. An independent specialized state body has been established in the Republic of Bulgaria, with significant powers of prevention, protection against discrimination and promotion of equal treatment, namely the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD). It operates by virtue of the specialized Protection against Discrimination Act (CPA), which aims to provide every person with the right of equality before the law, equality of treatment and opportunities to participate in public life, and effective protection against discrimination. The law protects against discrimination all individuals in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, without distinction, based on 19 protection characteristics, including race, ethnicity, gender, disability, nationality, personal and social status, sexual orientation and any other characteristics established by law or in an international treaty, to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party.

The proceedings for protection against discrimination is regulated in the two sections of Chapter Four of the Protection against Discrimination Act, which can be brought before the CPD, as well as in court. Section I regulates the proceedings before the CPD, providing that one of the grounds for its initiation is on the appeal of the person concerned, regardless of his / her gender. The content of the complaint or the alert, the cases where the proceedings shall not be initiated and where the proceedings shall be terminated, the procedure for examining the complaint, etc., are also settled there. The proceedings before the CPD end with the issuance of a decision establishing the violation, the offender and the person concerned, determining the type and amount of the sanction, imposing compulsory administrative measures or finding that no violation of the law has been committed and the appeal is not upheld. The Commission decision is subject to appeal under the Administrative Procedure Code. No state fees are charged for the proceedings. Costs incurred in the course of the proceedings are borne by the Commission budget.

Except in the cases described above in Section I, any person whose rights under the PDA or other laws governing equality of treatment have been violated, may bring an action before the District Court. In it, the victim may be asked to establish the violation, order the defendant to cease the violation and restore the situation before the violation, to refrain from further violations in the future, and to seek compensation for his / her harm. When the victim's rights are affected by an administrative act issued in violation of the PDA or other laws governing equality of treatment, he / she may appeal the act to the court in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Code. For PDA court proceedings, no state fees are collected, but the costs are at the expense of the court budget.

Regarding the provision of statistics on hate crimes committed against persons with disabilities, i. e. how many are registered by the police authorities, how many pre-trial proceedings have been instituted by the prosecution, how many of the accused have been subsequently convicted, please be informed that the Ministry of Justice does not collect and maintain independent statistics on crimes committed on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. The provisions of Section III, "Judicial Statistics. Information Systems", Chapter 20, "Interaction between the Judiciary and the Executive Authorities" of the Judiciary Act regulates the SJC’s and the Prosecutor's Office of Bulgaria's obligations in relation to the collection of judicial data, as well as the maintenance of the Unified Information System for Fighting Crime.

*3.а. On steps taken to establish standards and / or good practices for the presentation and portraiture of people with disabilities in the media, including codes, guidelines or other measures*

The Electronic Media Council (EMC) once again reminded providers that special attention should be paid to people with hearing impairment and visual impairment when preparing information related to voting. For voters, the media, especially television, are the main information tool that shapes their choices. That is why it is important that the part of the Bulgarian citizens with impaired hearing and sight be given the opportunity to make an informed choice.

The adaptation of the programs of the providers for the persons with special needs is guaranteed by the international standards, the European legislation and the Bulgarian legislation. The EMC is convinced that a diverse media environment is part of both pluralism in civil society and an opportunity to respect the different needs of citizens.

For the programs of BNT and BNR the time territories were specified in the pre-election agreements concluded on the basis of Art. 189, para, 4 of the Electoral Code. In addition to the general parameters of the monitoring, additional features related to pluralism of reporting, as well as opportunities for the apprehension of election campaign messages and access to the relevant program by persons with hearing and sight impairments, are provided for the public providers BNT and BNR.

The conclusions from the specialized election monitoring are that the Bulgarian National Television provided a gesture translation in larger program territories for the election campaign in 2017, with almost all election debates being conducted in an intelligible for the hearing-impaired way. It was a step in a positive direction.

The Central Election Commission had once again envisaged the possibility for people with hearing and visual impairments to apprehend the materials related to the voting campaign.

*3.b. On the existing legal framework, measures and best practices for regulating social media in connection with the application of Article 8 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Human Rights for Freedom of Expression*

Among the good practices we should note that in the period 2017-2018 Bulgaria chaired the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and played a key role in the preparation, organization and holding of the 10th and 11th sessions of the Conference. Ensuring full and effective participation of all stakeholders (over 1,500 participants) – the countries, the UN system, people with disabilities and their representative organizations, human rights defenders, civil society, national human rights institutions, international organizations, etc., contributed to their significant success. People with disabilities and their representative organizations, at the initiative of Bulgaria and with the support of other countries in the Conference Bureau, were actively involved in all stages of the preparation and implementation of the Conference, in accordance with the principles of the Convention on the Participation of Persons with Disabilities.

*4.а. On information on the existence and implementation of programs and activities, including successful examples of campaigns to change public attitudes towards people with disabilities and their rights, and fighting negative stereotypes*

The National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB) organizes forums and trainings that incorporate practically focused topics related to the implementation of the rights of people with disabilities in the implementation of both municipal and national policies at the local level. Within the framework of the NAMRB project for the training of municipal experts, targeted topics have been identified relevant to the measures for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, such as: risk groups (elderly, disabled, at-risk children, marginalized groups, etc.), "Current European policies and regulatory framework in the area of ​​spatial planning (including international legal acts, etc.)", etc.

Regarding the requirements of the legislation and providing the necessary conditions for an accessible environment to cultural values ​​and to information on movable cultural values, understandable for people with disabilities, the Ministry of Culture organizes regular trainings with museum specialists working with the public to ensure access for people with disabilities to museum exhibitions. In 2017, the Ministry of Culture organized and conducted two trainings for museum professionals on the topic: “Increasing access to cultural heritage. Working with audiences." In the forums and trainings organized by NAMRB, where appropriate, we include practically focused topics related to respecting the rights of persons with disabilities in the implementation of both municipal and national policies at the local level. For example, in the framework of the NAMRB project for training municipal experts, we have envisaged the following targeted topics relevant to the measures for implementing the Convention on Disability: “Municipal Regulations for the Effective Organization and Operation of Care Services for vulnerable and risk groups (the elderly, people with disabilities, children at risk, marginalized groups, etc.)" and "Current European policies and regulatory framework in the field of spatial planning (including international legal acts, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities, etc.)."

The Centre for Human Resources Development and Regional Initiatives is an integral part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria. It provides training and development opportunities for Bulgarian and foreign officials from the central and local administrations, working in the field of social policies, representatives of social partners, municipalities and non-governmental organizations. Another area of ​​activity is the implementation of an active policy for the training and retraining of unemployed and employed persons in various thematic areas.

According to the Ministry of Defence, the legislative framework on military service has been revised and updated in accordance with the current legislation of the European Union, NATO and national legislation, in order to create conditions conducive to the elimination of discriminatory practices.

Organizing and participating in joint activities to raise awareness among local and foreign public about good practices and lessons learned from the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and other regulations.

Improving the gender balance in all structures of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces, and adapting operational work to NATO and EU standards in formulating policies for missions and operations, focusing on: engagement with local populations in the area of ​​responsibility , intercultural communication, standards of conduct and disability, as well as ensuring gender balance in structures involved in missions and operations, especially with components in direct contact with the local population.

The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria are developing their capabilities, including the prospects for gender equality, even in disrupting harmful practices for people with disabilities in all areas of life.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, within the framework of bilateral and international activities, emphasizes the rights of persons with disabilities, including them in priority areas and monitoring the dissemination of the good experience of Bulgaria, as well as observing the highest standards in this field.

Insofar as raising public awareness of people with disabilities and their rights is part of government policy, the Ministry of the Environment and Water contributes to the implementation of the planned activity under strategic objective 6 of the Plan by implementing the policy of raising public awareness and culture in the environment. It seeks to pursue an information policy consistent with the need to increase public sensitivity to the rights of persons with disabilities. All publications on the website - information materials on the state and management of the environment and the public events in the sector, as well as all public speeches, according to the occasion and theme, are in a spirit of positive trends in behavioural, social and visual models in society with regard to attitudes towards the rights of persons with disabilities.

In order to implement the activities that are within the competence of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW) set out in the Action Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015-2020), the development of a Concept for Change is organized in the national legislation related to the implementation of Art. 9 of the Convention on accessible architectural environment, approved by the Council of Ministers. Within the limits of its statutory responsibilities, the MRDPW continues to work to improve the regulatory requirements for the design and construction of an accessible architectural environment for the population, including for people with disabilities, in accordance with the commitments arising from the Convention.

The Commission for the Protection against Discrimination conducts annual training on European legislation and anti-discrimination policy through thematic seminars, attended by guest speakers and representatives of EU institutions. The seminars cover a wide range of responsible officials from central government bodies, territorial municipal administrations, the judiciary, as well as media and civil society representatives.

The prepared curriculum documentation of the vocational education and vocational training, held at the Ministry of Interior Academy, paid attention to the protection of human rights and the lawful implementation of police powers. In the process of training police officers, European legislation and internal legal acts governing the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities are studied. The trainees and probationers are trained in the human rights course taught in the first year of full-time and part-time undergraduate courses in the field of crime counteraction and preservation of public order. human rights in the context of European legislation, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In the compulsory discipline of Police Law, in the second year of the full-time and part-time bachelor's courses in the specialty "Crime and Public Order", human rights are given a special place in the context of European legislation, including the Convention on the Law on Police. the rights of people with disabilities. In the study of the compulsory discipline of Police Law, in the second year of the full-time and part-time undergraduate courses in the specialty "Fighting crime and preservation of public order", as well as in the courses for initial vocational training, attention was paid to the protection of the rights of persons with disability. Special attention was paid to the duties of police officers in dealing with citizens, regulated by the Code of Ethics for the behaviour of civil servants in the Ministry of Interior.

The compulsory training course "Protecting Public Order", studied in the second year of the specialty Fighting Crime and Protecting Public Order, as well as in the courses for initial vocational training, thoroughly re-examines the duties for police officers stipulated in the Code of Ethics for the conduct of government officials in the Interior Ministry, according to which a government official in the Interior Ministry does not allow discrimination based on a disability. The syllabus on the above discipline provides for the topic "Actions of police authorities in cases of domestic violence, Police Protection of Children." Emphasis in training is placed on measures to protect and support people with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence. The organization of the activity of police and junior police inspectors on the territorial servicing of citizens and their obligations, regulated in Iz-507 / 26.03.2008, for carrying out the reception of citizens and supporting victims of crime in the structural units of the Ministry of Interior are considered.

The mandatory course in Criminal Procedure, studied in the third year in the field of Forecasting and Planning, Countering Crime and Protecting Public Order FPCCPPO, as well as in the courses for initial vocational training, study the actions to be taken by the pre-trial bodies in the case of a crime against a disabled person. A special part of the discipline studies the specific procedure that must be followed in the different phases and stages of the criminal case. Attention was also paid to the right to protection of victims of crime (Art. 74, 75 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CCP)).

The Master's Degree Program in Public Administration provides for the study of the discipline "Protection against Discrimination", which complements the knowledge of the nature and functioning of public administration. The principle of equality before the law, equality in the social sense of the word and social justice have been distinguished. The issues of protection against discrimination as part of the human rights issue, as well as the activities of the police for protection against human rights, as well as the activities of the police for protection against discrimination on the basis of disability, were also considered. The curriculum of this discipline includes separate topics on hate crime, disability, legal framework, indicators for identifying and investigating and protecting victims of hate crime.

The Ministry of the Interior annually organizes and conducts a five-week course for updating the professional qualifications of police officers on the topic of Police Practices and Human Rights in distance learning. According to the curriculum of the course, particular attention is paid to international human rights standards, the Code of Ethics for the behaviour of civil servants in the Ministry of Interior, as well as respect for human rights in the exercise of police powers, in order to prevent discrimination.

The Ministry of Culture has organized and conducted two seminars for the training of museum specialists on the topic: "Enhancing access to cultural heritage and providing intellectual and physical accessibility for visitors with special needs".

The Agency for People with Disabilities finances projects of non-governmental organizations aimed at changing public perceptions of people with disabilities as full-fledged Bulgarian citizens.

On March 22, 2016, an International Conference on Equality of Persons with Disabilities was held in Sofia. Achievements and practices." The event is part of the program of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. High-level representatives from Bulgarian and the European institutions participated in the forum. Experts from more than 12 countries, as well as national and international NGOs of and for people with disabilities, participated in the discussion. During the forum, good practices for promoting participation and equal opportunities for people with disabilities were exchanged and members of the Coordination Group were invited to participate. Participants also outline measures taken in different countries to provide support for people with disabilities in the community.

In 2017, the Executive Director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) approved rules for the use of the established "Made in Bulgaria by disabled people" mark. The mark is granted for use upon submission of an application form of specialized enterprises and cooperatives of persons with disabilities, sole proprietors, sole proprietorships with limited liability and ordinary employers of persons with disabilities, beneficiaries of APD programs. The Agency for People with Disabilities finances competitive bids from non-profit non-governmental organizations of and for people with disabilities. Activities aimed at changing public perceptions of people with permanent disabilities are funded, such as full-fledged Bulgarian citizens, who give publicity to and demonstrate their active public position, achievements in their employment through the direct and active participation of people with disabilities.

In view of the methodological functions of the Minister of Culture related to the implementation of the National Community Centres Act, the Office conducts regional workshops and seminars with the Community Centres’ employees on the topic “The place and role of the Community Centre in the National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020". These forums continued in the period 2015 - 2017 in order to promote and exchange information on good examples of the work of the Community Centres, including the involvement of people with disabilities in creative activities and creating conditions for accessibility to educational and cultural forms. There are successful traditional practices in Community Centres and libraries, including the involvement of qualified persons to work with children with disabilities, as well as opportunities for people with disabilities to work in Community Centres and libraries. In the Community Centres, the widest network of public libraries in the country has been established. Many of them provide free digital skills training for different target groups - retirees, children, people with disabilities, etc. The technical equipment provided is adapted for use by people with disabilities.

Bulgaria, as chairman of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention for the period 2017 - 2018, organized a Conference for the 10th and 11th sessions. Vice-presidents of the Conference were Germany, Tunisia, Sri Lanka and Ecuador. The theme of the Conference was "No one to be left behind through the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" and reflected the commitment of states and other stakeholders to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the ambition of the 2030 Agenda. The conference attracted the largest participation from all stakeholders around the world, with over 1,500 participants. During the General Debate, more than 140 representatives made speeches, 35 of which at ministerial and other high political levels were the first to actively participate in the speeches by representatives of a number of large international non-governmental organizations of people with disabilities and other representatives of civil society, representatives of the National Human Rights Institutions, international organizations, etc.

*4.b. On the subject, scope, target group, impact, partners, participation and role of people with disabilities and their representative organizations and key success factors.*

When conducting the Assessment at the request of the MRDPW as contracting authority, the scope of the study has been expanded to include good practices, policies and approaches in ensuring an accessible architectural environment in 10 countries in Europe, the EU and international informal networks and non-governmental organizations, selected according to the specifics of their profile to facilitate their analytical testing and benchmarking. As a result of the collected information on practices and policies in providing an accessible architectural environment, it is concluded that trends in the international legal framework, EU policies and their application in countries across Europe are towards an integrated approach to creating accessibility not only for people with disabilities, but for all people. What is common to all the good practices examined is that they are always aimed at providing a full range of accessibility services related to transport and information technology, not just to the architectural environment. Public consultations include representatives of public institutions, state and local self-government bodies, industry organizations, including professional organizations of architects, engineers and builders, higher education institutions for teaching architecture and construction, national representative organizations of and for people with disability, nationally representative employers' organizations, nationally representative employee organizations. The involvement of the National Disability Assistants Program (NDAP) as target groups and stakeholders in the implementation of the assessment makes it possible to more clearly identify problems in the implementation of existing policies, regulations and monitoring in relation to ensuring an accessible architectural environment. This makes it possible to more precisely identify and take measures to amend and supplement the legal framework to ensure an accessible environment and to overcome legal obstacles in the legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria.

*5. On the role of people with disabilities and their representative organizations in the creation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all measures related to changing public awareness. Give examples of specific consultation and cooperation mechanisms.*

According to the Disabled Persons Act, the state policy on the rights of persons with disabilities is implemented by state and local authorities in cooperation with nationally representative organizations of and for persons with disabilities, nationally representative organizations of employers and nationally representative organizations of employees and employees who create conditions and assist in the implementation of programs and projects in this field. State and local authorities, in accordance with their powers, adopt, respectively issue normative acts, strategies, programs, standards and other documents related to the rights of persons with disabilities.

In order to cooperate in the development and implementation of the policy on the rights of persons with disabilities at the Council of Ministers, a National Council for People with Disabilities (National Council) is chaired by a Deputy Prime Minister. The National Council is an advisory body in which representatives of the state, appointed by the Council of Ministers, nationally representative organizations of and for persons with disabilities, nationally representative organizations of employees, nationally representative organizations of employers and the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, participate. The Council issues opinions on draft normative acts, strategies, programs, plans and other acts affecting the rights of persons with disabilities and cooperates with the bodies for coordination and monitoring under the Disabled Persons Act.

For the implementation of the policy on the rights of persons with disabilities, the regional governors establish regional councils, which include representatives of the regional and municipal administration, of the territorial bodies of the executive power, of the nationally representative organizations of and for persons with disabilities, nationally representative organizations of employees and employers, non-profit legal entities for carrying out activities in the public interest, and other interested parties working in the field of the rights of persons with disabilities. The district councils assist and support the district governors in implementing, analysing, developing strategies, plans, measures and other activities related to the implementation of policy for the rights of persons disability at the regional level.

The adopted and implemented Action Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which covers the period 2015-2020, sets out measures in the strategic objective 8 of the Convention - raising public awareness and changing attitudes on the rights of persons with disabilities. Nationally representative organizations of and for persons with disabilities are partners in the preparation and implementation of the abovementioned action plan.

All issues concerning the rights of persons with disabilities that are reflected in normative or strategic documents are discussed in the National Council for People with Disabilities, in which representatives of nationally representative organizations of and for persons with disabilities participate as equal members.