**1.** The Ombudsman, as the **Independent Mechanism for the Promotion, Protection and Monitoring of the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, raises awareness and promotes the protection of the materialization of all rights of persons with disabilities and the implementation of the Convention and promotes the protection and entrenchment of the rights of Persons with Disabilities in general.

In this hence, Officers of the Ombudsman’s’ Office provide training regarding the Convection and the rights of persons with disabilities, and our Office organizes campaigns and/or events regarding human rights (incl. the rights of persons with disabilities). In particular:

* During 2014-2016, training sessions about the Convention and the provision of quality services were provided to medical, nursing and physiotherapeutic staff of the Ministry of Health.
* In 2016, the Ombudsman had launched a campaign regarding the right to vote for persons with disabilities. A new campaign about the same issue is about to be launched again, before the next elections in Cyprus.
* In 2017, the Ombudsman, in cooperation with *Cyprus Confederation of* Organizations for the Disabled, organized yhe event “Prospects for promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, after UN's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Concluding Observations for Cyprus”
* In 2018, the Ombudsman had launched a campaign on the occasion of the 70 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Our Institute has created a short video, which includes, amongst others, statements, of popular/recognised people in Cyprus, on human rights values and principles. This video was being broadcasted and distributed on the social media and on tv, either in its entirety or in pieces, since all short statements have been produced to form individual spots, as well (Link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC014JpRrsqMauTiyabofokw/videos>).
* During the campaign, additional promotional and informative material has been distributed (a small bag which included a translated version of the UNHR in Greek (and Braille), the leaflet of our Office competences, the Statement of the Commissioner on the occasion of the 70 years since the adoption of the Declaration, and a silicon wristband with the moto of the campaign #standup4humanrights and the logo of our Office). This material was given out during the seven different events organized by our Office throughout the campaign period (5-21 December 2018).
* After the campaign, during 2019, seminars about the protection of human rights (incl. the rights of persons with disabilities) were organised to schools all over Cyprus.
* During 2019, training was provided to Police Academy regarding the social model of disability.

In addition, our Institution has already published several reports regarding the rights of persons with disabilities. Most of these reports are uploaded in our website.

(<http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/index_new/index_new?OpenForm>)

**2.** In 2017 the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights, as an Independent Mechanism for the Promotion, Protection and Monitoring of the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (IMM), prepared its **written contribution** to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities following the publication of the List of Issues. In the contribution, the following were noted regarding article 8 of the CRPD:

*“24. The IMM agrees with the observations included in the ARPAD (Alternative Report of the Pancyprian Alliance for Disability) regarding to the portrayal of persons with disabilities in the media and recommendations made for raising awareness and training journalists and media providers.*

*25. Following the findings of the IMM on the need to combat stereotypes, prejudice and harmful practices for persons with disabilities, a training program for employees in the public sector has been implemented and remains ongoing with the cooperation of the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration and the participation of the DSI (Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities) and the CCOD (Cyprus Confederation of Organizations for the Disabled).*

*26. The cooperation of the Office of the Ombudsman with the Cyprus Policy Academy does not cover the CRPD while there is no indication that training programs organized by the Ministry of Health reflect the principles and values of the CRPD. The same concern is expressed with regard to the training programs of the DSI mentioned in the SRLoI (State Reply to the List of Issues ) on the International Classification of Disability Functioning and Health (ICF).*

*27. The compatibility of the language in documents used/produced by public authorities with the CRPD remains a constant issue before the IMM.*

*28. A recent Report of the IMM analyzed the incompatibility of the language, approaches and philosophy of the Ministry of Education and Culture reflected in the national curricula “Health Education” mentioned in the SR (State Report) trainings material and everyday practice, with the human rights model, the standards of articles 8 and 24. Knowledge and attitudinal barriers as well as the overall silence regarding disability were pointed out leading to specific recommendations for training of “special teachers” and other persons involved in the school environment and the Ministry of Education and Culture.*

*29. Save the efforts to always include an awareness raising dimension in the Reports of the IMM conferences campaigns are organized and brochures are being issued”.*

**3.** The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in its **Concluding observations** on the initial report of Cyprus (2017) noted:

*Awareness-raising (art. 8)*

*23. The Committee notes with concern that awareness about the Convention is low. It is also concerned about the lack of adequate awareness-raising campaigns targeted at public and private actors on the Convention in general, in particular on the elimination of disability-based discrimination.*

*24. The Committee recommends that the State party, regularly and in close collaboration with representative organizations of persons with disabilities in line with article 4 (3) of the Convention:*

*(a) Develop and implement adequately funded awareness-raising initiatives to eliminate sociocultural discrimination and to foster knowledge of the Convention among the general public of all ages, and in both the public and private sectors;*

*(b) Initiate and evaluate cross-sectoral campaigns and trainings reinforcing a positive image of persons with disabilities as independent, dignified and capable holders of human rights.*

**4.** In 2017, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities issued the **First National Strategy for Disability 2018-2028**. According to paragraph 4.12 of the Strategy, the strategic goals and objectives that will guide any policy and taken measures and actions, include, among others, *“Cultivation and fostering of a culture of equality and non-discrimination, via information campaigns, learning and training activities and capitalizing new information and communication technologies”.*

**5.** The Ministry and the abovementioned Department have also issued, in December of 2017, the **Second National Action Plan for Disability 2018-2020**, according to which:

* There is a suggested action for the Department to inform, educate and disseminate knowledge and information on disability within the framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The expected result for this action, is raising awareness and knowledge regarding disability to people of all ages, with or without disabilities (par. 25).
* The Ministry of Education and Culture will inform student about the rights of persons with disabilities. The expected result for this action, is, among others, the development of positive attitudes towards disability with a purpose the acceptance and the positive interaction.

There is also a suggested action for the Ministry to promote new actions for the elimination of stereotypes in education against women and girls with disabilities. The expected result for this action, is the abolishment of stereotypes in education against women and girls with disabilities.

* The Ministry of Health will provide First Aid Training Seminars for Officers - Carers of Institutions for persons with disabilities, aiming to improve the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

There is a suggested action for the Ministry to convert 4 information leaflets to braille or audio files and to Easy to Read accessible text for people with intellectual disabilities.

* The Department of Public Works of the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Works (a) will take measures to improve accessibility of privately owned public service buildings as well as the accessibility of the roads, (b) will promote public transport internet applications in "AA" standard accessible format and audio and visual information on new buses.
* The Department of Civil Aviation of the same Ministry, will promote seminars for information on specialized infrastructure and facilities for passengers with disabilities and the airport service points for persons with disabilities will operate on a 24- hour base.
* The Ministry of Internal Affairs will provide raining to the Officers who facilitate government websites, will prepare a relevant manual and will organize seminars for all Governmental Organizations.
* There is also a suggested action for the Consumer Protection Service of the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry, to conduct training sessions to persons with disabilities regarding their consumer rights.

**6.** Our Institute participates in **Parliamentary Committees** during legislative process or discussions on issues relating to the rights of persons with disabilities, CRPD and UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Concluding Observations on the initial report of Cyprus.

During the legislative process or discussions in the Parliament, its members and the representatives of the involved Authorities/Ministries, are positive on the issues related to the rights of persons with disabilities and they usually don’t have any objections on our Institute’s statements about them.

Please note that in the abovementioned meetings the representative organisations of persons with disabilities participate as well.

**7.** Ombudsman is the chairperson of the **Advisory Committee for Monitoring the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, which includes organizations of persons with disabilities. The committee meets several times per year. In addition, many meetings are taking place between the Ombudsman and persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, regarding the rights of persons with disabilities and/or specific issues that bother them.

For instance, during the current year, a meeting was held with DPO and Parents Associations of Children with Disabilities, regarding the proposed draft law for inclusive education.

Also, almost all of our reports regarding the rights of persons with disabilities are shared to Cyprus Confederation of Organizations of the Disabled and/or other DPO.

**8.** According to **Combating of Racism and Other Discrimination (Commissioner) Law [L.42(I)/2004]**, *“every treatment or behaviour, provision, term, criterion or practice which shall, within the framework of activities in the public and or the private sector, be specially provided for, prohibited or disallowed, by any law or regulations in force for the time being for constituting in accordance with their provisions direct or indirect discrimination for reasons of racial or ethnic origin, religion, beliefs, community, language, colour,* ***disability****, age and sexual orientation, shall constitute discrimination prohibited by law…* *any treatment or conduct within the framework of activities in the private and private sector constituting discrimination prohibited by law in accordance with section 6* (abovementioned*) …shall not be permitted”.*

**9.** The abovementioned Law 42 (I)/2004 was the result of the incorporation of Directives 2000/78/EC and 2000/43/EC into Cyprus law, after the accession of Cyprus into the EU. With this Law, the mandate of the Ombudsman was expanded. In particular, the powers and capacities of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights were broadened by giving it the general guideline to act as an **Equality Body** and, specifically, to promote equal treatment between men and women and to combat discrimination in the enjoyment of rights and freedoms, as an Equality Body.