**14/10/2011**

**Reply of Lithuania on Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Human Rights Council resolution 16/15**

**1. Are there any restrictions on the right of persons with disabilities to vote and be elected? If so, what are those restrictions?**

There are no restrictions on the right of persons with disabilities to vote and be elected. Article 33 of The Constitution stipulates that all citizens shall have the right to participate in the governance of their state both directly or through democratically elected representatives as well as the right to enter on equal terms in the state service of the Republic of Lithuania.

The Law on the Elections to the Seimas (Parliament) and the Law on Elections to Municipal Councils stipulates the right to vote for every citizen of the Republic of Lithuania who has the right to vote. It is also provided by Law that voters, who are unable to come to a polling district to vote, can vote by post.

There is only one general restriction to all: citizens who have been declared legally incompetent by the court shall not participate in elections.

**2. What are the steps taken by your Government to ensure that persons with disabilities participate in political and public life?**

According to the Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as UN Convention) States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others.

National Social Integration Programme for Persons with Disabilities 2010-2012 Year (thereinafter – National Programme) has been approved to promote social integration process of people with disabilities and to ensure implementation of the provisions of national and international legislation, relating to social integration of persons with disabilities. One of the tasks of the Program is to promote participation of people with disabilities in political and public life.

According to The Plan for Implementation of the National Programme in 2011 it is scheduled to prepare and approve requirements to ensure accessibility of people in a wheelchairs, visually impaired to polling stations and to ensure their right to vote, also there has to be prepared and approved the description of procedure of prior voting which would facilitate voting procedures for those who are unable to attend the election because of disability.

There are about 268 thousand persons with disabilities in Lithuania. They are represented by more than 30 associations of persons with disabilities. People with disabilities or their representatives and disabled people‘s associations take part in different activities, which aim is to raise awareness and provide information to encourage participation in voting in elections and in general. In Lithuania social movement of disabled is supported from the year of 1993 (very soon after the re-creation of the state independence in 1990). Activities of associations of persons with disabilities are financed by state budget organizing competitions every year.

**3. What steps has your Government taken and what mechanisms exist:**

1. **to ensure close and active consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in decision-making processes, including those related to the development of legislation and policy?**

In the decision-making processes, including the development of legislation and policy, the rights of people with disabilities are defended and represented by the associations of disabled persons. Decisions are taken after assessment of the opinions, experiences and the needs of persons with disabilities.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations of disabled people take part in the activities of The Council for the Affairs of Disabled under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. The Council analyzes the most important issues in relation to social integration of people with disabilities and submits proposals to the Minister of Social Security and Labour. The Council is formed on voluntary basis on the grounds of equal partnership rights from state institutions and representatives delegated from different associations of persons with disabilities. After ratification of the UN Convention, the mentioned Council also monitors its implementation.

1. **to promote participation in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with public and political life?**

The Department of the Affairs of the Disabled under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour is responsible for the co-ordination of the National Programme. Therefore following the tender rules the Department finances social integration programmes of disabled which are implemented by the associations of the disabled. Funding is provided for different projects of support for the activities related with representation and protection of disabled rights.

1. **to promote organizations of persons with disabilities at international, national, regional and local levels?**

From 2011 under the National Programme projects of social rehabilitation services for disabled are funded in municipalities (Program is coordinated by the Department of the Affairs of the Disabled under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour). Such financing model will increase the availability of services for disabled people and will be encouraged cooperation of local governments and associations. In the municipalities there are also Disability Councils, which consist of persons with disabilities and deal with disability issues.

Also it is worth to mention that funding provided for disabled associations can be spent for paying contributions for participation in international organizations working in the sphere of protection of disabled rights.

**4. How are persons with disabilities and their representative organizations involved in monitoring the Convention?**

After ratification of the UN Convention disabled persons are involved in the process of monitoring of implementation of the provisions of UN Convention through representatives of nongovernmental organizations of disabled people who take part in the activities of the Council for the Affairs of Disabled under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour.

**5. Are statistics collected in relation to the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life? Please provide relevant statistics and data if possible.**

There are no specific statistics on persons with disabilities participating in political and public life.

There are about 268 thousand persons with disabilities in Lithuania. They are represented by more than 30 associations of persons with disabilities.

**6. Is your Government involved in international cooperation programmes related to promoting political rights of persons with disabilities? Please describe the ways the programmes are inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities.**

Most important international instrument concerning this issue is the UN Convention which is perceived as a new impetus in the area of human rights enforcement. The UN Convention was ratified by Lithuania on 27 May 2010 committing itself to take concrete actions to implement the provisions of the UN Convention. Promoting political rights of persons with disabilities and their participation in political and public life are enshrined in the UN Convention.