

Concept Note

On-site Monitoring of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Webinar

Wednesday, 23 September 2020

14:00 PM - 16:00 PM (CET)

Zoom Link will be provided closer to the date of the event

As governments all around the world rush to respond to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), it is crucial in this process to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) and address their needs swiftly. From the very beginning of the pandemic, PWDs have been declared as a risk group impacted more significantly by COVID-19 because of the barriers they face in everyday life.¹ The critical nature and absolute necessity of additional considerations to be taken in order to protect PWDs have been emphasized by the various bodies of the UN, as well as the Council of Europe and the European Union.²

The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres stated that PWDs are more likely to live in poverty, they experience higher rates of violence, neglect and abuse and, thus, are among the hardest hit by COVID-19.³ Besides, Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, urged States to take additional steps to include PWDs and outlined that PWDs face even greater threats in institutions, as care facilities have recorded high fatality rates from COVID-19 and horrific reports of neglect have emerged during the pandemic.⁴

¹ "Disability considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak", WHO, available at: <<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/disability-considerations-during-the-covid-19-outbreak>>. Last Accessed [23.07.2020].

² For more details, please visit ENNHRI's webpage on COVID-19 and Human Rights, at the following link: <<http://ennhri.org/covid-19/#1588155393820-875361c6-8874>>. Last Accessed [23.07.2020].

³ Statement by the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, 6 May 2020, available at: <<https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/we-have-unique-opportunity-design-and-implement-more-inclusive-and-accessible-societies>>. Last Accessed [23.07.2020].

⁴ Statement of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 30 April, 2020, available at: <<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25847&LangID=E>>. Last Accessed [23.07.2020].

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Catalina Devandas also stresses that the situation of the PWDs in institutions, psychiatric facilities and prisons is particularly grave, given the high risk of contamination and the lack of external oversight.⁵

Against this background, the current crisis has once again exposed the risk of institutional living. It is obvious, that while deinstitutionalization of care facilities is key to the better protection of human rights, the situation of PWDs placed in such institutions must be monitored urgently. Besides, the impact of COVID-19 on mental health is another important issue to be addressed. In order to minimize the mental health consequences of the pandemic, any program to reduce or address mental health problems created by the pandemic needs to be monitored and evaluated.

Since it is not clear how long the pandemic is going to last, it is important for NHRIs to adjust their work to the new circumstances. Due to the high importance of the monitoring of human rights of PWDs in closed facilities/institutions, it is essential to adapt and create monitoring mechanisms to safeguard both - prevention of disease and human rights protection of PWDs.

Based on this background, the main objective of the event is to exchange on the need, nature and methodology of the monitoring visits conducted in closed facilities/institutions during the pandemic. Additionally, the invited speakers will share information and best practices regarding safety measures used for protecting monitors, as well as beneficiaries from the spread of the virus, which is to guarantee better the protection of PWDs placed in closed facilities/institutions, including prisons, mental health facilities or care homes.

⁵ Statement of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 17 March, 2020, Available at: <<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25725>>. Last Accessed [23.07.2020].



Webinar

Draft Agenda

Wednesday, 23 September 2020

14:00 PM - 16:00 PM (CET)

Zoom Link will be provided closer to the date of the event

14:00 - 14:10	<p><u>Opening Remarks</u></p> <p><i>Ms. Debbie Kohner, Secretary-General, European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)</i></p> <p><i>Ms. Nino Lomjaria, Public Defender of Georgia</i></p>
14:10 - 14:40	<p><u>Panel I</u>. On-site Monitoring of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19 Pandemic - International and Regional Perspectives</p> <p><i>Moderator: Ms. Ekaterine Skhiladze, Deputy Public Defender of Georgia, Chair of ENNHRI CRPD WG</i></p> <p>CPT Perspectives – “Monitoring the situation of persons with disabilities deprived of their liberty: the CPT’s experience and the COVID-2019 pandemic” Mr. Mykola Gnatovskyy, President, CoE European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)</p> <p>UN Perspectives (Title of the presentation TBC) Ms. Mi Yeon KIM and Ms. Rosemary Kayess, Members of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</p> <p>Persons with Disability Organization Perspectives – “The role of EDF in monitoring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on persons with disabilities in Europe: key lessons learnt” Ms. Ana Pelaez Narvaez, Vice President, European Disability Forum (EDF)</p>
14:40 – 15:00	<p><u>Interactive Q&A Session</u></p>

15:00- 15:30	<p><u>Panel II.</u> On-site Monitoring of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19 Pandemic – NHRI Perspectives</p> <p><i>Moderator: Ms. Ekaterine Skhiladze, Deputy Public Defender of Georgia, Chair of ENNHRI CRPD WG</i></p> <p>Georgia (Title of the presentation TBC) Mr. Giorgi Burjanadze, Deputy Public Defender of Georgia</p> <p>Czech Republic - “Less care, less visits. Monitoring of rights of people with disabilities in health and social care services during COVID pandemic” Ms. Zuzana Durajová, Lawyer, Office of the Czech Public Defender of Rights</p> <p>Belgium (Title of the presentation TBC) Ms. Carole Van Basselaere, Lawyer, Service Handicap/Convention ONU, Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (UNIA)</p>
15:30 - 15:50	<p><u>Interactive Q&A Session</u></p>
15:50 - 16:00	<p><u>Wrap-up and Closing Remarks</u></p> <p><i>Ms. Debbie Kohner, Secretary-General, European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)</i></p> <p><i>Ms. Nino Lomjaria, Public Defender of Georgia</i></p>