**DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (DSID) has been established as from 1/1/2009, as a new Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, according to Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 66.763 dated 6/2/2008 and the State Budget Law for 2009.

The aim of the Department is the promotion of social protection, social inclusion and employment of persons with disabilities. The vision of the Department is the improvement of the quality of life of persons with disabilities and the creation of new prospects for social inclusion through the formulation, coordination and implementation of reforms.

The organisational structure of the Department is based on four sections: a) Management of the System for the Assessment of Disability and Functioning, b) Social Benefits, c) Vocational Rehabilitation and other Support Services and d) Focal Point for the implementation of the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In addition the Department chairs the Special Fund of the Vocational Training and Rehabilitation Centre and the Executive Board of the Christos Stelios Ioannou Foundation.

**1. Management of the System for the Assessment of Disability and Functioning**

2014 was a milestone year for the Department as the project for a new system for the assessment of disability and functioning in Cyprus was implemented and fulfilled. It was an important project, which established a scientific, reliable and credible basis for the assessment of disability and functioning, commonly accepted and used by state services and thus minimising the efforts of persons with disabilities to follow multiple bureaucratic procedures to be assessed in order to fulfill their rights. The project was co-financed by the European Social Fund with a total budget of €1,8 million all over the period of 2009-2014 and concerned the establishment of a Disability Assessment Centre, the issue of Assessment Manuals based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health of the World Health Organisation, special training and services rendering of doctors and other health and rehabilitation professionals who take the role of the assessors etc.

460 assessments were performed in 2014, giving feedback for improving any weaknesses in the assessment mechanisms. The whole system was put in full operation with on average 40 assessments weekly, providing to persons with disabilities and to public services holistic certifications on disability and the needs of people.

Based on the results of this project a decision was taken by the Council of Ministers to expand the project in the new programming period 2014-2020 by the establishment of two additional Disability Assessment Centers in Limassol and Larnaca in order to descentralize the activity and satisfy the increased needs for assessments.

**2. Social Benefit Schemes for Persons with Disabilities**

The main Social Benefit Schemes of the Department are the following:

* Severe motor disability allowance: Persons with severe motor disabilities are entitled a monthly allowance of €337,66 (At 31.12.2014, 1656 persons were entitled to this allowance and the cost for 2014 was €6.869.229)
* Care allowance for persons with paraplegia of €350 monthly (At 31/12/2014: 575 beneficiaries with a cost for 2014 at €2.630.845)
* Care allowance for persons with tetraplegia of €854,30 monthly (At 31/12/2014: 596 beneficiaries with a cost for 2014 at €6.273.912)
* Special Allowance for Blind Persons of €316,37 monthly (At 31/12/2014: 2437 beneficiaries with a cost for 2014 at €9.683.360)
* Mobility Allowance of €51- €102 monthly (At 31/12/2014: 574 beneficiaries with a cost for 2014 at €648.968)
* Financial Assistance for persons with disabilities in order to buy a car (In 2014: 162 beneficiaries with a cost for 2014 at €615.946)
* Financial assistance for the provision of technical aid (In 2014: 514 beneficiaries with a cost for 2014 at €799.997)
* Financial assistance for the provision of wheel chairs (In 2014: 202 beneficiaries with a cost for 2014 at €824.998).

**3. Vocational Rehabilitation and other Support Services**

The main Vocational Rehabilitation Schemes provided by the Department are the following:

* Scheme for the creation and operation of small units for self-employment purposes of Persons with Disabilities. The Scheme provides a grant up to €8.543 to persons with disabilities who do not have the financial means for self-employment through the Special Fund of the Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for Person with Disabilities. In 2014, there were 6 beneficiaries and the cost for 2014 was €20.541
* The Vocational Training Scheme which funds persons with disabilities with an amount of up to €1.708,60 in order to get training courses of their own choice, which will increase their employment possibilities. In 2014 there were 8 beneficiaries and the total cost was €12.359
* The Supported Employment Scheme, which funds Organisations for persons with disabilities with an amount of up to €13.500 yearly for each supported employment programme, which intends to help groups of 5-10 persons with disabilities (mainly intellectual disability) to get and maintain a job position in the open labour market, by a special job coach. In 2014 23 programmes operated with 246 persons with disabilities in the open labour market, with a cost of €293.582.

The Department is also responsible to support and monitor the implementation of the Recruitment of Persons with Disabilities in the Wider Public Sector Law which is a special law forcing all public services to recruit up to a quota of 10% of their vacant posts, persons with disabilities who fulfill specific objective criteria. The Department supports the authorities responsible for the recruitments by providing them independent reports by multidisciplinary committees assessing disability and capability for the duties of the specific posts. 9 persons with disabilities were recruited under the Law in 2014 at the Educational Services, increasing the total number of persons recruited since 2010 up to 92.

Additional social services schemes are the following:

* Financial assistance to the organisations of persons with disabilities for coverage of their running expenses and the operation of social programmes. The Confederation of the Organisations of Disabled People also receives an annual grant for almost all its expenses.
* Subsidisation of organisations of persons with severe disabilities to recruit and manage Social Assistants for their members in order to support them at visiting state services, hospitals and doctors, banks, day care programmes, shopping, recreation activities etc.

**4. Focal Point for the implementation of the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

The monitoring and promotion of the implementation of the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is coordinated by the Department which has been defined by the Council of Ministers as the Focal Point in Cyprus. This is a collective effort in cooperation with all public services co responsible for disability issues, the Office of the Ombudsman and Human Rights Commissioner who has been defined as the Independent Mechanism for the Convention as well as the Pancyprian Confederation of the Organisations of the Disabled who have the right to participate in all mechanisms for the monitoring and implementation of the Convention.

The activities of the Department as the Focal Point in 2014 concernedQ

* Maintaining communication and coordination of information within a network of 80 Contact Points in Ministries and Services dealing with disability issues as well as 10 contact points in the Office of the Commissioner of Human Rights and 10 contact points at the Confederation of the Organisations of the Disabled.
* Coordination of 8 thematic technical committees for the monitoring and implementation of the National Disability Action Plan 2013-2015
* Preparation and submission of reports, data and information to the UN Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as the EU High Level Group on Disability
* Provision of information on disability issues in Cyprus and the Department through its website at [www.mlsi.gov.cy/dsid](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/dsid)