**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, Welfare 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 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 sectors: 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**

The project “Expansion of the Implementation of the New System for the Assessment of Disability and Functioning” is implemented by DSID in the programming period 2014-2020 through financing by the European Social Fund with a total budget of €4,2 m. The project consists an expansion of the previous project implemented in the period 2007-2013 for the introduction of the new disability assessment system with a cost of €1,8 m. As from December 2013 the first Disability Assessment Center operates in Nicosia and from May 2017 the second Center operated in Limassol. An additional Center is expected to operate in Larnaca in 2019. The objective is the performance of 19.500 assessments throughout the whole project.

Through the new system the disability and the needs of the applicant are assessed by multidisciplinary committees and the citizen receives a holistic report on the rights for social benefits and services that is entitled to. The assessment results are input in the national disability data base that is gradually created aiming to support the formulation of targeted policies of the state relating to disability.

**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 €339,55 (At 31.12.2018, 2.033 persons were entitled to this allowance and the cost for 2018 was €8.455.160)
* Care allowance for persons with paraplegia of €350 monthly (At 31/12/2018: 923 beneficiaries with a cost for 2018 at €4.209.382)
* Care allowance for persons with tetraplegia of €854,30 monthly (At 31/12/2018: 741 beneficiarieswith a cost for 2018 at €8.048.558)
* Special Allowance for Blind Persons of €318,14 monthly (At 31/12/2018: 2.026 beneficiarieswith a cost for 2018 at €8.079.667)
* Mobility Allowance of €51- €102 monthly (At 31/12/2018: 2.263 beneficiaries with a cost for 2018 at €1.194.082)
* Financial Assistance for persons with disabilities in order to buy a car (In 2018: 427 beneficiaries with a cost for 2018 at €1.737.900)
* Financial assistance for the provision of technical aid (In 2018: 1.000 beneficiaries with a cost for 2018 at €1.282.837)
* Financial assistance for the provision of wheel chairs (In 2018: 476 beneficiaries with a cost for 2018 at €1.231.190).
* The scheme for providing the Blue Badge i.e. the card for facilitating parking for persons with disabilities continued to operate.
* A new scheme started as from 2017, being the issue of the European Disability Card, based on a European project with the participation of 8 EU member states. The special website for the Card is [www.eudisabilitycard.gov.cy](http://www.eudisabilitycard.gov.cy)

**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 2018, there were 5 beneficiaries and the cost for 2018 was €20.227
* 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 2018 23 programmes operated with 300 persons with disabilities in the open labour market, with a cost of €328.375.

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. 125 persons with disabilities were recruited under the Law since 2010.

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 (20 organisations were subsidized with a cost in 2018 of €71.840). The Confederation of the Organisations of Disabled People also receives an annual grant for almost all its expenses (€70.000 for 2018).
* 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 (6 organisations were subsidized for 821 beneficiaries with disabilities and a cost for 2018 of €121.079).
* The home in the community “Ledra” continued its operation successfully supporting 8 persons with severe intellectual and mental disabilities who were deinstitutionalized from Ward 14 of the Mental Health Hospital (cost for 2018 €252.852).

**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 appointed 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 (80 contact points in Ministries and Services), 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.

Τhe Council of Ministers in December 2017 approved the First National Disability Strategy 2018-2028 and the Second National Disability Action Plan 2018-2020. The Action Plan contains 86 actions for implementation by 8 Ministries (46 running actions and 40 new actions).