

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN 2007



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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN
OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
IN 2007

MONITORING REPORT

Tirana 2008

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADRF	Albanian Disability Rights Foundation
ANAD	Albanian National Association of Deaf People
ASED	Association pour le Soutien de l'Enfance en Détresse
CRCA	Children's Human Rights Center of Albania
DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers
DDCA	Development Disability Coalition Albania
GZT	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
IMI	Institute of Medical Insurance
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics
ISS	Institute of Social Insurance
M	Mean
MCDAW	Medical Commission for the Determination of the Ability to Work
MEDPAK	Mbrojtja e të Drejtave të Personave me Aftësi të Kufizuar (Defense of Rights of People with Disabilities)
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MLSAEO	Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
MPWTT	Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Telecommunication
N	Number
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSPD	National Strategy On People with Disabilities
SD	Standard Deviation
SSS	State Social Service
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSA	Very Special Arts
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Report on the Implementation of the National Action Plan of the NSPD for 2007 is the second in the series of the formative evaluation reports for NSPD and it includes the progress made during 2005-2007 by focusing on the status of progress in 2007.

The data for the report were mainly collected through two six-region surveys with participants from Tirane, Shkoder, Durres, Vlore, Elbasan and Korce. The first survey was directly related to each measure of the National Action Plan and the participants were government officials at the central, regional and local level, who provided official information on the status of progress on the measure assigned to their office, as well as representatives of four disability nongovernmental organizations. It must be noted that although the participation in the survey by government officials was encouraged by the titular heads and 113 quantitative-qualitative questionnaires were completed, many government employees provided either no or very little information relevant to the measures of the National Action Plan. Under these conditions, the information was also collected through relevant official documents, personal contacts and on-line publications.

The second survey was conducted with people with disabilities and family members from the same six regions. The 954 participants, half of whom (50.6%) were people with disabilities, were asked to evaluate the situation in the country in regards to the five areas of the National Action Plan through a quantitative-qualitative survey.

There were some noteworthy accomplishments. In 2007, the number of people who received state benefits increased: there were 100,246 people who received either the disability benefit (n=55,754) or the invalidity pension (n= 44,852). Additionally, 12,842 family caregivers received the family caregiver benefit. The number of students in special education schools was 888, and the number of students integrated in the regular schools was 219. Furthermore, 106 children with special needs were integrated in inclusive kindergartens. The number of people who received rehabilitation services in

public and non-public residential and day care centers was 985 individuals, mostly children and teenagers, while 88 individuals were in sheltered employment. The labor offices and vocational training centers as well as some newly renovated or newly built schools and health care centers have entrance ramps and even elevators in some cases. Some of the newly designed housing projects have accessibility elements, as well.

Steps forward were made in the field of physical rehabilitation through the approval of the Physical Medical Rehabilitation National Action Plan (2007-2011), the reconstruction of some physical therapy wards in hospitals and the construction of some new physical therapy centers.

New models of community mental health services were promoted with a multidisciplinary approach. Community services for people with intellectual disabilities gained ground by the addition of new centers and innovative multidisciplinary approaches were promoted through models of services and training of staff and management teams. A team of Albanian athletes participated in the Shanghai Special Olympic Games.

Some progress was made in the area of legislation with the approval of four new relevant Decisions of the Council of Ministers and the work on the bill on the status of people with intellectual disabilities. In the area of capacity building, the accomplishments worth mentioning are the first Master's Program in special needs in the "Ismail Qemali" University of Vlore, and the numerous training workshops with teachers, staff of the day and residential care centers, as well as employees of the government offices at the local, regional and central level. Another important new development is the creation of the Development Disability Coalition Albania,

with 25 members who represent organizations that advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, other nonprofit organizations, donors, representatives from the business community such as Vodafone and Credins Bank, as well as representatives from public and private entities. It must be noted that much of the progress is thanks to the efforts of the various Albanian and International nongovernmental organizations operating in the field of advocacy and services.

Despite the successes mentioned, a meticulous analysis of all the findings revealed that there has been no progress at all in 39 of the measures (i.e., 41 % of the total) and

only two measures have been completed on schedule, which means that the implementation has been delayed for 98% of the measures the National Action Plan. The list of issues is too long to include in this executive summary, but the unrealized tasks are found in all the five areas of the action plan. As a consequence, half of people with disabilities and their families (51.8%) consider their financial situation to be poor, the communities where people with disabilities live continue to be inaccessible to them (the survey participants gave it a mean grade of 5.08 with the majority of the participants giving it a failing grade of 4), and 4,534 children with special needs between ages of 6-18 do not receive any form of education (a flagrant violation of their human rights). People with disabilities and their family members gave opportunities for employment a failing grade of 4.89 and opportunities for vocational training a mean grade of 4.91 (a failing grade) as well. Their perceptions were reinforced by the reports of the nongovernmental organizations.

The most disturbing data come from the survey with people with disabilities and their family members. The participants strongly believe that they are not considered as equal partners in the relevant decision making process at the local, regional and central level (they judged this aspect with a failing grade of 4.88). In addition, they believe that people with disabilities are not treated as equal citizens, and they are discriminated against in many fields of life (the mean grade for this aspect was 4.97). There are regional differences in the perception of the situation, with people from Tirana giving higher mean grades than people from Vlore.

The NSPD was written to address the most basic needs of people with disabilities in Albania. The failure of the state agencies to realize the tasks according to the scheduled timelines indicates that work to promote awareness and accountability needs to be enhanced at all levels. The reports has a list of recommendations for each area.

INTRODUCTION

The National Strategy on People with Disabilities (NSPD) is the program of action of the Albanian government to improve the lives of people with disabilities by developing new policies and programs and bringing the existing policies and programs in line with the international guidelines issued by the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union. NSPD is a legal document, Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) No. 08, (01/07/ 2005), which defines the objectives to be achieved in the period 2004-2014, and the respective responsibilities of the Albanian central and local government to carry out specific tasks to attain those objectives.

The fundamental principles of the NSPD reflect the principles of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities of the United Nations. They are formulated as follows:

1. Civil rights, equality and non-discrimination;
2. Self-determination;
3. Inclusion, participation and equal opportunities;
4. Free access and barrier-free environment;
5. Prevention, early detection and early intervention;
6. Rehabilitation; and
7. Accessibility to service and assistance.

The goal of the NSPD has been formulated "to ensure noticeable improvement in the social status and quality of life of the people with disabilities in the Republic of Albania in full compliance with the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities."¹

¹ NSPD, Albanian version, p.8.

The document has stated the following seven objectives that will ensure the achievement of the goal:

1. To encourage education towards a society that creates opportunities for participation for people with disabilities;
2. To guarantee human rights of the people with disabilities;
3. To secure optimal education for people with disabilities;
4. To secure opportunities for employment and economic advancement for people with disabilities;
5. To promote responsible and accountable public social services for people with disabilities;
6. To support the efforts of people with disabilities for good quality of life in the community; and
7. To collect information on people with disabilities and disability related issues.

NSPD has determined five fields of intervention:

1. Life without barriers (accessibility);
2. Services (medical, social, rehabilitative);
3. Employment, vocational training and education;
4. Capacity building; and
5. Legislation and research.

The National Action Plan, which is part of the NSPD document, specifies 95 measures that will be taken, as well as respective timelines and deadlines, the implementation agency and funding sources. The timelines cover 10 years (2004-2014), the implementation agencies are respective ministries and their programs, local government and non-profit organizations. The funding sources are specified as the state and local budget, non-profit organizations and donors. No specifications have been made in regards to projected financial resources that will support the implementation of the NSPD.

This is the second monitoring report of the implementation of the National Action Plan. The first report, published in 2007, focused on the work done in 2005-2006. The report concluded that although some progress was noted in several areas, such as the

increase of the disability benefit, and the approval of an inclusive curriculum for the mandatory school system, many of the objectives of the strategy for that timeframe were not met, as most of the measures were not implemented.

The goal of this formative evaluation report is two-fold. First, it identifies the progress made during 2005-2007, and the support the Albanian state and society gave to people with disabilities to secure their inclusion in society. Second, it recognizes the problematic areas and pinpoints some of the reasons for them, with the hope that it will lead to analyses of reasons for lack of progress and development of plans of action that will address the issue. The findings of the study will be reported in five parts, one for each area of the National Action Plan.

The official Albanian definition of a person with a disability is "a person whose physical function, mental capacities or psychological health are highly likely to deviate for more than six months from the condition which is typical for the respective age and which restricts the participation in social life of that person"². This definition follows the WHO recommendations.

During 2007, there were 100,606 people who were eligible for disability benefits in Albania. Table 1 specifies the categories recognized by the Albanian legislation as eligible for these benefits.

Table 1: **Number of People with Disabilities in Albania**

Disability Category	Number
Blind people	10,047
People with para or tetra plegia	2,046
People with Mental and Physical Disabilities	43,301
Labor Invalids	44,852
Total	100,246³

The monitoring report has been prepared by the Albanian Disability Rights Foundation (ADRF). ADRF was established in 1996, as a successor of the OXFAM program in Albania in the field of disabilities. The philosophy of ADRF is based on the social model

² National Strategy on People with Disabilities, English translation, p. 7.

³ This figure does not include the Second World War veterans, who are about 200 individuals.

of disability and equalization of opportunities for people with disabilities. One of its areas of activity has been expressed in the mission statement as "promoting initiatives for the improvement of legislation for people with disabilities as well as its implementation." ADRF has been instrumental in pushing forward the idea for the NSPD and bringing together various partners from the central and local government and civil society. Being aware that the approval of the NSPD by the Council of Ministers was only the first step, ADRF took upon itself the responsibility of being the "mixer and shaker" to ensure the implementation of the strategy by the responsible agencies. ADRF published the first monitoring report, as well.

METHODOLOGY

The Process

The study followed a participatory action research model by making sure that people with disabilities and family members, as well as other important NSPD stakeholders were included in all aspects of this evaluation. The process of designing the study entailed two stages. The first stage was preparatory, and it laid the foundation for monitoring the implementation of the NSPD during 2005-2006. The second stage built on the work done and lessons learned during the first stage.

The preparatory stage involved a working group and the local networks. The working group was made up of two university professors in the field of special education and social work (the latter has a son with disabilities), one civil engineer who is a wheelchair-user and an advocate, and two members of the ADRF staff, one of which is a lawyer. The local networks were created through the regional meetings in Tirane, Korce, Durres, Elbasan, Vlore and Berat. Participants of the local networks were representatives of the local government at both the regional and municipality level, representatives of disability grassroots organizations and directors of service organizations. Participants at the Tirane meetings also comprised representatives of the central government from various Ministries. The local networks worked under the guidance of the experts from the working group in the context of the regional meetings. First, the participants followed a presentation on the National Strategy, its objectives and the National Action Plan. Then, they were informed about the work for the development of the research design to evaluate the progress of the strategy. Through a presentation, participants learned about the fundamental principles, as well as the methodology of evaluation designed by the working group. At the end, the participants were divided into groups according to their areas of expertise where they gave their opinion on the procedure of data collection. Their feedback was incorporated into the methodology designed for the first monitoring study, Implementation of National Strategy for People with Disabilities (2005-2006).

During the second stage, the methodology of data collection was examined and some improvements were made to increase the response rate and to enhance the quality of the information. A new working group was created, which worked together to bring this study to fruition. The working group consisted of one university professor (who is also the parent of an adult with disabilities) and five members of the ADRF staff with expertise in various areas such as construction, legislation, special education, vocational training, employment and social services. One of the group members is also a wheelchair user. All the group members were trained on the fundamentals of research and program evaluation in an intensive two-week course.

Description of the Evaluation Design

The objective of the study was to measure the progress made for the implementation of the National Action Plan of the NSPD during 2007, and the impact it has had on the lives of people with disabilities in its intervention areas. Two separate, but interrelated studies were designed based on the National Action Plan, which guided both the process for the formulation of data collection instruments and the determination of sources of information.

The first study collected quantitative and qualitative data on the implementation of each one of the 95 measures of the National Action Plan. The primary sources of information were experts in the central and local government agencies that were assigned the responsibility for the implementation of the measure as well as four nongovernmental disability organizations (NGOs). Six regions of the country were included in the study: Tirane, Durres, Vlore, Shkoder, Korce and Elbasan. (For a full list of participating government offices go to the Appendix 1). Data were collected in May- July 2008. A total of 113 structured questionnaires, with quantitative and qualitative data, were completed. The questionnaires were built separately for each area of the action plan and included all questions that were pertinent to the office following this model:

Has Measure .XXXX, planned to be implemented in 2007 happened?
 DONT KNOW NO IN PROGRESS YES

Has somebody or a task group been appointed to follow this issue?
 DONT KNOW NO IN PROGRESS YES

Has an action plan been formulated with deadlines for this issue?
 DONT KNOW NO IN PROGRESS YES

If your response is IN PROGRESS, please specify what has been done until now,

If your answer is NO, please specify the barriers encountered:

To encourage the participation in the survey, the questionnaires were accompanied by the letter of the approval for the study and the permission to provide information by a government official in position of authority. (See Appendix 2 for samples of some of the letters). The participants were also invited to attach any documentation that was appropriate and would help the evaluation process. At the end, the participants were asked to state their position, and sign and date the questionnaire, so that the information could be considered official.

Although the participants were carefully chosen, the box most chosen in the completed questionnaires from the regions in particular was "Don't Know." Whenever possible, attempts were then made to collect information through phone calls or emails through other informants.

The results of the study, on the implementation of the National Action Plan, have been presented for each measure separately, noting whenever possible, the progress as

reported by each agency charged with the implementation.

The second study was a written, structured, quantitative-qualitative survey with people with disabilities and family members from six regions in the country: Tirane, Durres, Vlore, Shkoder, Korce and Elbasan. The study was conducted in May-July 2008. The participants were volunteers, and they were recruited through the disability organizations and special education schools. To protect the identity of the participants, the questionnaires were anonymous and no personal information was collected.

A total of 954 people participated in the survey; 467 were people with disabilities (50.6%) and the rest were family members. Both genders were represented, with a slight overrepresentation of males (53.9%). The people with disabilities were of various age groups and needed different levels of support, as Fig. 1 shows; and they represented various disability categories (see Fig. 2).

Fig.1. Level of support needed

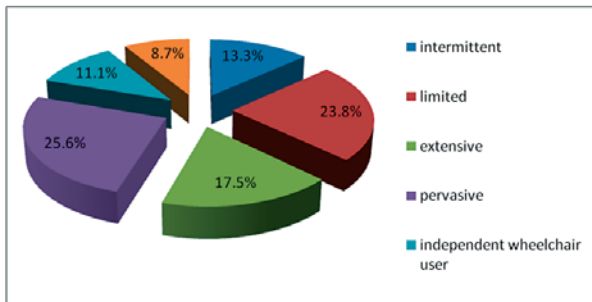
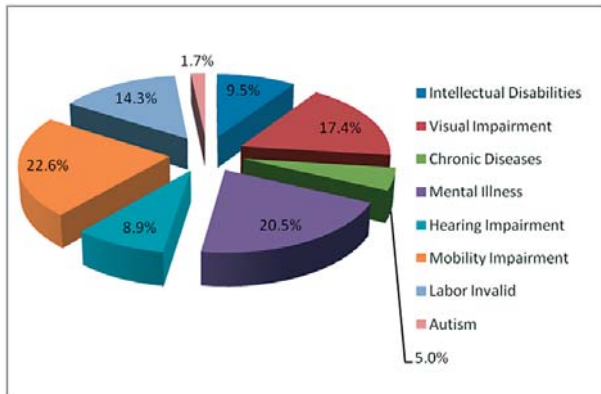
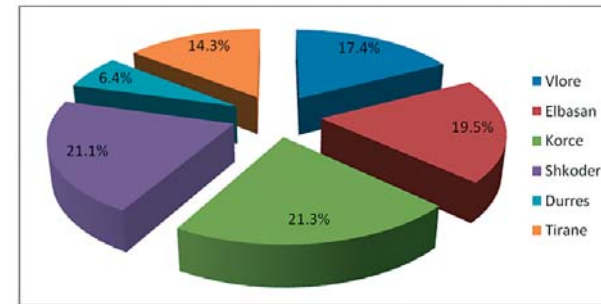


Fig.2. Categories of disabilities represented



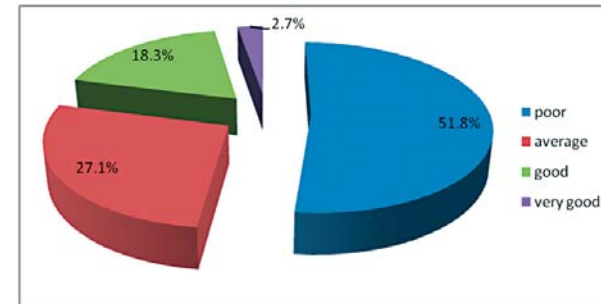
The participants did not represent the six regions proportionately. Korce was overrepresented and Durres was underrepresented as Fig. 3 illustrates. Nine of ten participants (91.9%) lived in an urban setting.

Fig. 3. Regional representation



Families and people with disabilities had different financial situations, with half of the participants describing themselves as "poor" as Fig. 4 indicates.

Fig. 4. Financial situation



The questionnaire consisted of a section on demographics and 25 questions that were about the five areas of the National Action Plan. The participants were asked the note their perception with a grade from 4-10 (which is s the Albanian school grade system). The following is the model of the questions asked:

How accessible is the environment in your own house to create the opportunity for you/ your family member who has visual impairments or is a wheelchair user to perform all his normal everyday functions? What grade would describe this situation	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	No Information N/A
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	-----------------------

The questionnaire was piloted with a group of parents and people with disabilities prior to being administered. A test-retest method was used to check for reliability, and content validity was ensured through the comparison with the National Action Plan, as well as through the feedback of the pilot respondents.

The data of the questionnaire were processed with SPSS and statistical tests were conducted as needed. The charts were prepared in Excel.

ALBANIAN LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR DISABILITIES

Some of the most important documents which state the legal rights of people with disabilities in Albania are the following:

- The Constitution of the Republic of Albania: Article 59, sections (e) and (f) provide that, "the government within its constitutional competencies and other means at its disposal and in compliance with private initiative aims at: e) taking care and helping the elderly, orphans and invalids, f) health rehabilitation, special education and integration of people with disabilities in society and continuous improvement of their living conditions.
- Law No. 9355, (03/10/2005)⁴, On the Social Assistance and Service, regulates the functions and the administration of social services.
- The Strategy of Social Services (2005-2010), approved with DCM No. 265 (04/28/ 2005), defines how the decentralization process should enhance local government functions for establishing, managing and enriching the social services based on community needs.
- The National Strategy on People with Disabilities, approved with DCM No. 8 (1/7/2005), introduces the main goals and the objectives of the government and other stakeholders in the areas of accessibility, services, education, vocational training, employment, legislation and research.

⁴ The dates have been written in the American format: month/day/year.

- The Standards of Social Services, approved with DCM No. 658 (10/17/2005), describes the standards for social services that must be met by all social service agencies.
- The Standards of Services for People with Disabilities approved with DCM No. 822 (12/06//2006), elaborate the general standards of social services for people with disabilities in order to protect their rights and fulfill their needs.
- The Law on Pre-University Education and the Normative Dispositions of Education encourage the integration of students with disabilities in the educational system.
- The Labor Code of the Republic of Albania, approved by the Law No. 7961 (07/12/ 1995), prohibits discrimination in hiring and training based on disabilities.
- Law No. 7995 (09/29/1995), On the Stimulation of Employment, establishes general policies to support and provide freely-chosen profitable employment.
- Law No. 8872 (03/ 29/ 2002), On the Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Albania, asserts and protects the citizens' right to get vocational education and training, regardless of their social status or health conditions.
- Law No. 7870 (10/13/1994) (amended), On Health Insurance in the Republic of Albania, provides that government funds the health insurance of people with disabilities.
- Law No. 8092 (3/21/1996), On Mental Health, states that people with disabilities are entitled to mental health care benefits free of charge.
- Law No. 8167 (11/ 21/1996), On Dental Services, lists the benefits for children with disabilities.
- DCM No. 401 (06/25/2004), On Urban and Architectural Rules and Norms for People with Disabilities, states that accessibility standards must be met in new constructions.

- Law No. 7889 (07/22/1998), On the Road Code of the Republic of Albania, contains several articles that ensure the safety of movement for people with disabilities.
- Law No. 7889 (12/14/1994) (amended), On the Status of Labor Invalids, describes the benefits for labor invalids.
- Law No. 8626 (06/22/2000), On the Status of the People with Paraplegia and Tetraplegia, describes the benefits for this population.
- Law No. 8098 (03/28/1996) (amended), On the Status of Blind Persons, provides the benefits of this population.

DISABILITY RELATED LEGISLATION APPROVED IN 2007

- DCM No. 396 (06/28/2007), On the Determination of Professional Diseases.
- DCM No. 114 (01/31/2007), On the Determination of the Amount of Contributions of People Who Are Placed in Public Residential Care.
- DCM No. 751 (11/07/2007), On the Approval of the Sectorial Strategy of Employment and vocational Training and its Action Plan.
- DCM No. 78 (02/07/2007), On the Amount, criteria and procedures of benefiting a sanitary packet for people with par-a and tetraplegia.
- Executive Order N.o 382 (02/26/2007), On the Approval of the Medical Criteria for the Determination of Disability.
- Instruction No. 303 (02/13/2007), On the Spending Quota for Food in the Public Residential and Community Services.

AREA I: ACCESSIBILITY

NSPD has covered accessibility in the Intervention Area I: Life without Barriers (Accessibility) stating that, "Accessibility is ...a precondition to the full and equal enjoyment of civil rights and for the access of people with disabilities to all services on equal terms with all other citizens," (p. 22 of the English translation). The three main steps to be taken to ensure it are identified as (a) removing barriers for participation in social, cultural and political life; (b) creating the necessary conditions to provide access to information; and (c) including the study of accessibility in the curricula of architecture, design, media communications and computer Science. In line with the above steps, the National Action Plan contains the following two objectives:

- I.1. Ensure accessibility for people with disabilities through the gradual removal of existing architectonic, infrastructure and transport barriers and through preventing the creation of new accessibility barriers.
- I.2. Utilize modern technologies to gradually overcome communication and information barriers for people with disabilities.

RESULTS

The reporting of the results will be done in two sections. The first section provides information on the status of progress made in implementing the National Action Plan of the NSPD in 2007 by reporting the findings for each measure planned. The reader must be aware that due to unavailability of the information for some of the measures, the full status of progress was difficult to evaluate. The second section of the results will present the findings of the survey conducted with people with disabilities and family members on their perception of the situation of the existing barriers, architectonic and otherwise, for people with disabilities.

IMPLEMENTATION OF 2007 TASKS, PREPARATION FOR FUTURE TASKS

Accessibility

Measure 1.1. Accessible flats will be built and accessibility measures will be applied to 10% of the buildings constructed with the funds of the National Public Housing Department.

Timeline: 2007-2014

Responsible institution: MPWTT

Findings:

Work to apply accessibility measures to the buildings constructed with the funds of the National Public Housing Department has started and some progress is reported. Plans are in place for the building projects Type 83/5, eight-storied, with elevators and entrance ramps to be constructed in Shkoder, Korce and Kavaje.

The local offices of the National Public Housing Department in Durres, Elbasan, Shkoder, Korce, and Tirane report no progress, but the situation seems to be different in Vlore, where the office reports progress, although no specifications have been made on the nature of progress.

Challenges: The National Public Housing Department has not yet undertaken a national study to identify all types of buildings that will be accessible, as well as the cost of accessibility elements.

The local offices, with the exception of Shkoder, report that there is no awareness of this measure. The specialists who work in the local offices do not have good knowledge of the existing legislation, and they have received no training on these issues.

Status: Very little progress

Measure 1.2. Public funds should be planned and used for the removal of existing barriers in the roads and public infrastructure, public buildings, schools, health institutions and state-owned buildings and for the construction of accessibility elements such as ramps, elevators, etc.

Timeline: 2007-2015

Responsible institutions: (a) MPWTT; (b) local government

Findings:

MPWTT reports that work continues on the removal of existing physical barriers, but it is impossible to estimate the amount of public funds allocated for accessibility in these projects since it is an integral part of the cost and cannot be calculated as a separate item.

The Ministry of Health reports that the designs for the reconstruction of public health care centers in Tirana include ramps, and during the reconstruction of the Clinic of Specialist Care No. 2, an elevator will be added. However, no specification on the related cost is available.

The Ministry of Education reports that funding has been earmarked, but the amount was not the reported.

Tirana: reports that funds have been allocated, but estimating their value is impossible.

Korce, Elbasan, Vlore, Shkoder and Durres report that no funds from the municipality budget have been earmarked for accessibility.

Status: Some progress

Measure 1.2.(a) Public funding of new social and infrastructure projects will include funding for wheelchair accessibility in the implementation of the pilot project "An Accessible Tirana." The pilot project will be replicated in other municipalities in the country.

Timelines: Tirana: 2005-2007

Other municipalities: 2007-2015

Responsible institutions: (a) MPWTT; (b) Tirana Municipality; (c) other municipalities

Findings:

MPWTT provided no data on the implementation of this measure.

The project, "An Accessible City" continues in Tirana in 2008. As part of this project, 16 schools were reconstructed in Tirana during 2007. Five streets, which have been reconstructed, have accessible sidewalks. The project for the reconstruction of another ten streets provides accessible elements in 35 points.

Observations in the city showed that the renovated educational institutions, such as schools and kindergartens, have been equipped with mostly basic accessible elements, such as entrance ramps. Additionally, although some of the sidewalks have become wheelchair accessible, the standards are not always met. Very little has been done to ensure the accessibility of local government offices, as well as health care, shopping and recreational centers. Many of the social service offices, where people with disabilities are supposed to receive the disability benefits and sign paperwork, are not accessible. For example, at the Mini-municipalities No. 7, No. 8, and No. 9, the offices are on the fourth and third floor respectively, in buildings without elevators.

The project, "Parking and Crossing Points for People with Disabilities," has been designed. It will ensure handicap parking in 35 locations in Tirana, as well as accessible sidewalks. The projected points of intervention are public administration offices, hospitals, schools, religious institutions, etc. The respective provisions in the Urban Construction Norms have guided the design process.

Some buses have been equipped with handicap accessible entrances and movable ramps. (No information is available on the number of these buses). Additionally, covered platforms with seating arrangements have been built in most of the bus stops. Some of the buses have identified seats for people with disabilities (no information is available on the number of these buses.)

None of the other municipalities participating in the study have started work on this measure. However, Durres and Shkoder report that the plans for new roads include accessible sidewalks and Durres report that shopping centers with accessibility features have been built.

Status: Very little progress

Measure 1.2b. Accessibility modifications will be done to the main hospitals in Tirana in the amount of 82.8 million lek.

Timelines: 2005-2010

Responsible institution: Ministry of Health

Findings:

The Ministry of Health reports that work is in progress on this measure, and there is a task force that follows it, but no specific data are available on the modifications done during 2007, or their cost.

Observations in various hospitals in Tirana revealed that the hospitals are not accessible to wheelchair users. For example, the Hospital of Internal Diseases is in a five story building, with no entrance ramp. The elevator was not functioning on the observation day. There is no elevator in the five story building of the Children's Hospital and the elevator was reported to be frequently out of order in the Neurological Hospital. None of the hospitals have accessible toilets.

Status: Very little progress



The entrance to Health Care Center No. 1 in Tirana. (August 2008)



The entrance to the Hospital of Internal Diseases. (August 2008)

Measure 1.2c. The hospitals at the regional and municipal level will provide an accessible environment adapted to the needs of people with disabilities.

Timelines: 2005 -2015

Responsible institution: Local government

Findings:

The 2007 Action Plan of the Ministry of Health has clear guidelines on accessibility for regional hospitals. The Unit of Investments in the Economic Department of the Ministry of Health has prepared an Order by the Minister of Health on the Knowledge and Implementation of Accessibility Standards for People with Disabilities.

The Regional Offices of Public Health report that work has started for some modifications mostly provision of ramps in entrance doors in Vlore, Shkoder, Durres, and Korce, and elevators (in Shkoder), but the hospitals are far from being fully accessible

to wheelchair users. Additionally, no comprehensive plans to address this issue have been reported. In addition, Vlore reports that no funds have been earmarked for this purpose. One of the barriers recognized by respondents is the lack of implementation of the respective accessibility rules and regulations during the reconstruction of the health care centers.

Status: Very little progress

Measure 1.2ç. Eight vocational training centers will become accessible for the training of people with disabilities by the State Employment Service.

Timelines: 2005-2007

Responsible institution: MLSAEO/ State Employment Service

Findings:

All the vocational training centers (n=9) have been equipped with ramps in their entrances. The MLSAEO have prepared an executive order requiring the modification of at least one of the first floor toilets, for wheelchair users, in each one of the centers. There are no plans to make the other floors accessible for wheelchair users.

Status: Good progress

Measure 1.2d. One hundred (100) schools and 90 day care centers (for children ages 3-6) will become accessible for people with disabilities.

Timelines: 2004 - 2014

Responsible institution: Ministry of Education and Science (MES)

Findings:

Neither the Ministry of Education, nor the Regional Departments of Education provided any data on the number of schools or day care centers that became accessible during 2007-2008. Additionally, they do not have a list of schools and day care centers that are accessible.

Tirana reported that public funds were used to make schools and kindergartens accessible, but the amount is impossible to estimate, as the accessibility elements are part of the design. All the schools under construction (n=9) have accessibility elements,

such as entrance ramps and accessible toilets, for students and teachers. Two of the schools have elevators.

Elbasan and Durres reported that no funding was earmarked for this measure.

Status: Some progress

Measure 1.2e. Continuous efforts will be undertaken to ensure that polling stations become accessible for people with disabilities and so are other public offices like courts, etc.

Timelines: Starting in 2006

Responsible institutions: (a) MPWTT; (b) local government

Findings:

MPWTT and the local government do not seem to be at all involved in implementing this measure. None of the specialists who completed questionnaires at the different departments of MPWTT had any knowledge of work done in this area. The same was true of the specialists in the municipalities of Tirana, Vlore, Durres, Korca and Shkoder. Elbasan noted that polling stations will continue to be on the first floor to accommodate people with disabilities, but no other modifications/adaptations have been done.

The responsibility for the accessibility of polling stations lies with the Central Electoral Commission. While no progress in increasing the number of accessible polling stations is reported, the Central Electoral Commission plans to add the information on the level of accessibility of the polling stations alongside their address prior to the 2008 elections. The identification of needs for accessibility modifications is underway. This will ensure the planning of funds for accessibility modifications in the 2009 elections.

ADRF prepared a packet with recommendations for the Electoral Reform to ensure that all people with disabilities exercise the right to vote. Additionally, it has been involved in advocacy efforts for the necessary changes in the New Electoral Code at the Albanian Parliament and the Commission for the Electoral Reform. If approved, the changes will secure the accessibility of all polling stations to people with mobility and/or sensory impairment.

The court houses are not wheelchair accessible in any of the municipalities where the study was conducted, and no plans were reported underway.

Status: Some progress

Measure 1.3. Accessibility measures shall be applied to transport means starting from the urban transport in Tirana and continuing with railway transport.

Timelines: Starting in 2007

Responsible institution: MPWTT

Findings:

The draft regulations "On the Technical Utilization of Railways" have been prepared. They include specific accessibility provisions for wheelchair users. Additionally, the manual "Albanian Standards for the Design and Construction of Roads," which provides the standards on wheelchair accessibility has been published. MPWTT reports that no funding has been earmarked for this measure, but a person has been assigned this responsibility and the needed budget has been estimated. The Institute of Transportation Studies has undertaken a study on the construction of a terminal for the interurban and international travel in Tirana. The terminal will have accessibility features. Municipalities report to have no information on this measure as they have not yet been involved in the process.

Status: Some progress

Measure 1.4. The streets will be equipped with handicap-accessible signs for people with hearing and visual impairments.

Timelines: Starting in 2007

Responsible institutions: (a) MPWTT; (b) local government

Findings:

MPWTT reports that no work has been done towards implementing this measure. Although MEDPAK reports that it has provided recommendations and suggestions, no measures have been taken yet to start work on this task.

The specialists in the department of urban planning in Tirana, Vlore, Elbasan, Dures and Korce report to have no information on this matter. Shkoder is designing the use of traffic lights in the city, and according to its report, is considering accessibility features for people with visual impairments.

Status: Very little progress

Use of Modern Technology

Measure 2.1. Support for the creation of "talking books" and publications in Braille, which includes school curricula, technical, legal and artistic literature.

Timelines: Starting in 2005

Responsible institution: NGOs

Findings:

The Albanian Association of Blind People provides this service through its National Rehabilitation Center for People with Visual Impairments, which is partially funded by the state budget. The center has a collection of 220 titles, which are school textbooks, fiction, selected scientific materials, the monthly publication of the newsletter "The Light of Sound", the monthly publication of the related Albanian and international legislation, etc. The Association also operates its printing house for Braille materials. It is estimated that about 300 people are Braille literate in Albania.

No information was provided by the Albanian Association of Blind People for the 2007-2008 indicators for this measure.

Status: Good progress

Measure 2.2. People with disabilities will be ensured access to government official business.

Timelines: Starting in 2005

Responsible institution: NGOs

Findings:

The public offices are not physically accommodating for wheelchair users. Additionally, there are no sign language interpreters in any of the public offices and no government reports are printed in Braille. The NGOs report that they have advocated for the implementation of this measure, but the local government has not shown any apparent interest. During 2007, Albanian National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) organized workshops for the training of the first group of sign language interpreters, but none of them were involved in interpreting for people with hearing impairments at any of the public offices.

Status: Little progress

Measure 2.3. Sign language will be included in visual media.
Timelines: Starting in 2005
Responsible institution: NGOs

Findings:

ANAD reported that no television programs broadcast in 2007 were accompanied by sign language interpretation. Also, there was no national strategy on the implementation of this measure.

However, a process of collaboration started with the Albanian Public Television (TVSH) initiated by the MLSAEO to include sign language interpretation in several Albanian Public Television shows.

Status: Very little progress

**RESULTS OF THE SURVEY CONDUCTED
WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS**

Almost half (48.4%, n=447) of the valid 923 participants with disabilities and their family members in the six-region survey are directly impacted by accessibility and assistive technology in infrastructure, home, work and recreational environments, as well as communication (See Table 2 for more information.

Table 2: **Participants with Disabilities Directly Affected by Accessibility**

Disability	Number	Percentage
Hearing Impairment	81	8.9%
Visual Impairment	159	17.4%
Mobility Impairment	207	22.6%

Eight (8) of the survey questions were about the perception of the accessibility of various environments primarily for wheelchair users and people with sensory impairments. As Table 3 shows, all the mean grades from people directly impacted (people with sensory and mobility impairment) are low, in the range of 4.50-6.34. The indicators of perception are the lowest for people with visual impairment, who gave all the questions in this cluster a failing grade, and somewhat better for people with hearing and mobility impairments, who only gave one aspect a failing grade: access to recreational facilities).

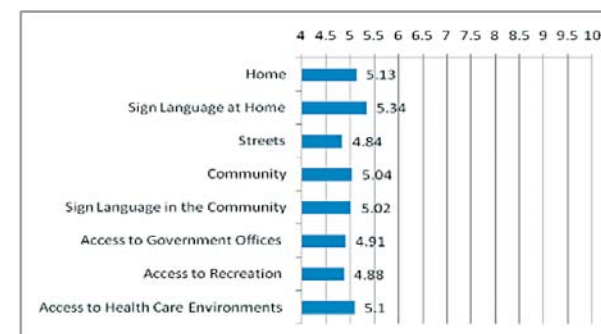
Table 3: **Mean Grades by Survey Participants Directly Impacted by Accessibility**

Disability Category		Home	SL at Home	Streets	Com.	SL in Gov. Offices	Rec.	Health Care Environment
Visual Impairment	M*	4.96		4.50	4.95	4.71	4.47	4.64
	N**	147		145	114	138	88	103
	SD***	1.08		0.76	1.36	0.90	0.75	0.94
Hearing Impairment	M		6.34			5.34	4.59	5.31
	N		59			68	32	39
	SD		1.50			1.37	1.22	0.76
Mobility Impairment	M	5.20		5.06	5.14	5.06	4.97	5.21
	N	184		175	136	176	174	182
	SD	1.02		0.94	1.14	0.95	0.96	1.22

Notes: M*=mean grade, N**= number of respective respondents for the question, SD***= Standard Deviation. SL=Sign language. Com.= community, Rec.= recreation. Gov.= government.

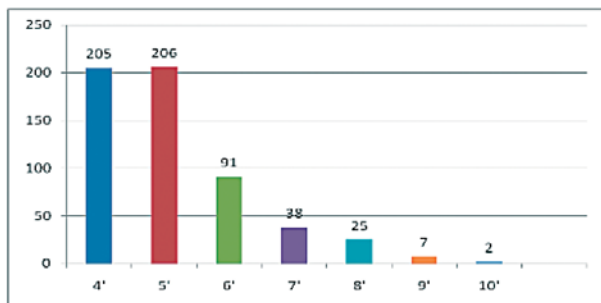
All the survey participants are aware of the issues with accessibility. They gave all the accessibility items a mean grade of 5.02, a mere pass, and as Figure 5 illustrates, they gave the accessibility of the streets and government offices a failing grade (respectively 4.84 and 4.88).

Fig. 5 **Mean grades for the situation of accessibility**



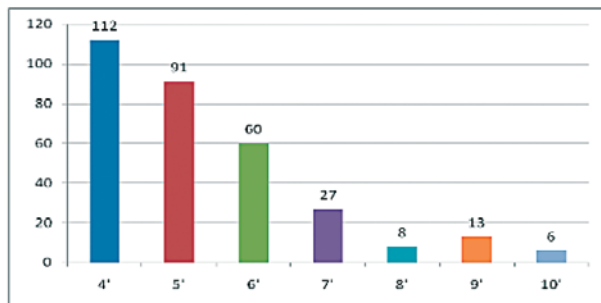
The following charts illustrate the frequency of the distribution of grades for every aspect of accessibility. It is easy to notice how the charts are skewed with the majority of grades being 4s and 5s.

Fig. 6. Home accessibility



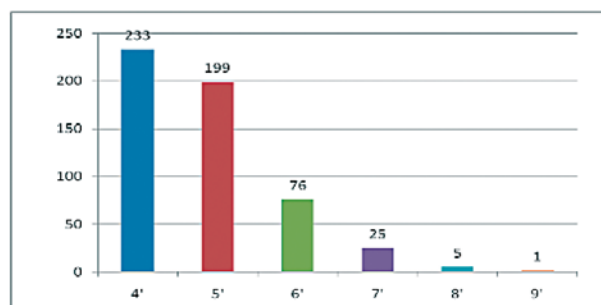
N=574
M=5.13
SD=1.2

Fig. 7. Use of sign language at home



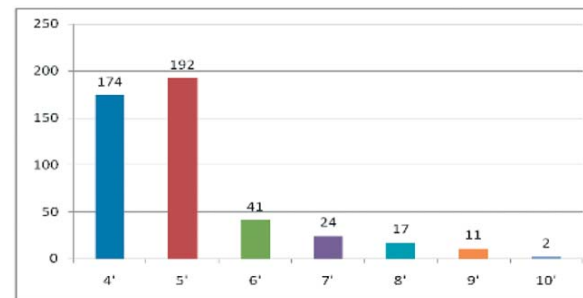
N=317
M=5.34
SD=1.46

Fig. 8. Street Accessibility



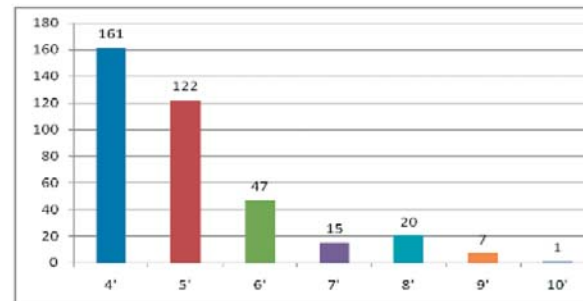
N=539
M=4.84
SD=.92

Fig. 9. Accessibility of the Community



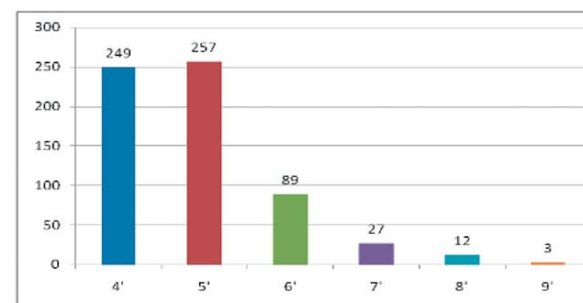
N=461
M=5.04
SD=1.22

Fig. 10. Sign language in the community



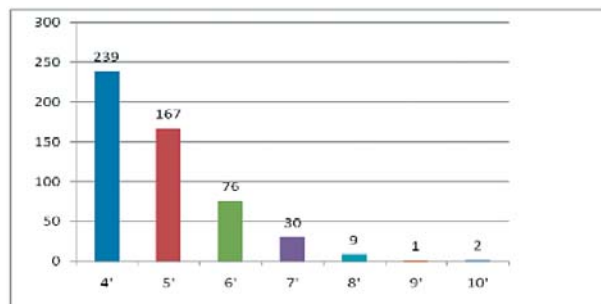
N=373
M=5.02
SD=1.25

Fig. 11. Accessibility of government offices



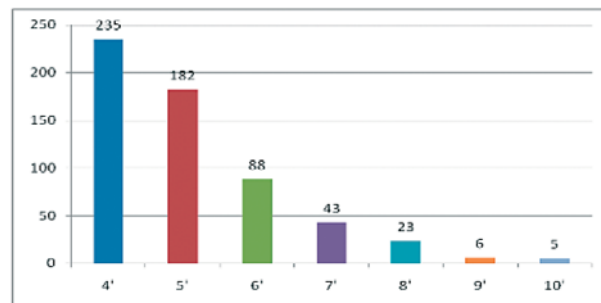
N=637
M=4.91
SD=.97

Fig. 12. Accessibility of recreational environments



N=524
M=4.88
SD=1.05

Fig. 13. Accessibility of the health care environments



N=582
M=5.10
SD=1.26

DISCUSSION

By now the reader must have come to the conclusion that although some progress has been made towards the fulfillment of Objective One "Ensure accessibility for people with disabilities through the gradual removal of existing architectonic, infrastructure and transport barriers and through preventing the creation of new accessibility barriers," the process continues to be very slow. The results for four of the measures (40%) show very little progress, and for five of the measures (50%) only some progress. Only one of the measures has been taken seriously enough to become partially completed. The following is a summary of the progress status for each measure of this objective relative to the deadlines:

Table 4: Status of Progress for Objective One: Accessibility

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
1.1. Accessible flats will be built and accessibility measures will be applied to 10% of the buildings constructed with the funds of the Housing Department.	2007-2014	MPWTT	Very little progress.
1.2. Funds will be allocated to remove existing barriers in the roads and public infrastructure, public buildings, health institutions and state-owned buildings.	2007-2014	MPWTT local government	Some progress.
1.2.(a) Public funding of new social and infrastructure projects will include funding for wheelchair accessibility in the implementation of the pilot project "An Accessible Tirana." The pilot project will be replicated in other municipalities in the country.	Tirana: 2005-2007 Other municipalities: 2007-2015	MPWTT Tirana Municipality Municipalities	Some progress
1.2.b. Accessibility modifications will be done to the main hospitals in Tirana in the amount of 82.8 million lek.	2005-2010	Ministry of Health	Very little progress.
1.2.c. The hospitals at the regional and municipal level will provide an accessible environment adapted to the needs of people with disabilities.		Local government	Very little progress.
1.2ç. Eight vocational training centers will become accessible for the training of people with disabilities by the State Employment Service.	2005-2007	State Employment Service MLS AEO	Good progress.

1.2d. One hundred (100) schools and 90 day care centers (for children ages 3-6) will become accessible for people with disabilities.	2004 – 2014	Ministry of Education and Science	Some progress.
Measure 1.2e. Continuous efforts will be undertaken to ensure that polling stations become accessible for people with disabilities and so are other public places like courts, etc.	Starting in 2006	MPWTT local government	Some progress.
1.3. Accessibility measures shall be applied to transport means starting from the urban transport in Tirana and continuing with railway transport.	Starting in 2007	MPWTT	Some progress.
Measure 1.4. Acoustic signals and other signals suitable for people with disabilities applied to the urban infrastructure.	Starting in 2007	MPWTT local government	Very little progress.

The results of measures taken for the implementation of Objective Two "Utilize modern technologies to gradually overcome communication and information barriers for people with disabilities," show the serious preoccupation of the NGOs, but very little interest from the state administration at the central or local government. The assigning of the responsibility to the NGOs in the Action Plan without committing any government support for funding or any other need may not be realistic as they do not have either the financial strength or the decision-making power to push ahead. These measures may be implemented only through the joint efforts of the central and local government and other state institutions with the non-governmental organizations.

Table 5: **Status of Progress for Objective Two: Use of Modern Technology**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
2.1. Support for the creation of "talking books" and publications in Braille, which includes school curricula, technical, legal and artistic literature.	Starting in 2005	NGOs	Good progress.
2.2. Access to public services is particularly supported for people with disabilities during communication with public administration.	Starting in 2005	NGOs	No progress.
2.3. Sign language will be included in visual media.	Starting in 2005	NGOs	Very little progress.

People with disabilities perceive the streets and their community to be inaccessible. They have difficulty leaving their homes, getting around in their community, seeing a doctor in a health care center or hospital, going to the workplace or attending schools and/or kindergartens. Furthermore, many of them still do not enjoy the most basic civic right: that of voting due to lack of accessibility of most polling stations. In addition, they cannot access the government offices, most of which (even the ones that are supposed to deal with people with disabilities) are not wheelchair accessible. Interpreters for sign language are not provided and official documents are not made available in Braille.

The progress noticed in this area of the Action Plan is basically at the central government level and in the municipality of Tirana. There is little awareness and expertise at the local government. The reason may be the frequent change of municipality staff. People who are trained are replaced by others. The latter need time and more training to understand the issues and their responsibility to work for the implementation of the measures. The situation is made worse by the lack of budget earmarking for accessibility at the central and local level, which does not allow for either the planning or the monitoring of the implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are for the main government agencies that are responsible for the implementation of this area of the National Action Plan:

1. The MPWTT is positioned in a very important role for the implementation of the NSPD. The following are some steps that could help it carry out its task successfully and in time:

- Remind the departments that are responsible for investments and construction in other ministries of the need to respect the accessibility standards.
- Delegate responsibilities for the implementation of the NSPD to all its regional and local offices by including specific tasks in their annual plans. Regularly monitor the implementation of tasks by collecting information. Include the information in the annual report of the ministry, and incorporate the data in the statistical database of the ministry.
- Ensure that accessibility standards are part of the new policies in construction, transportation and telecommunication.
- Set up an office assigned with the responsibility of ensuring and monitoring the fulfillment of accessibility standards.

2. The Ministry of Health, The Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry Tourism, Culture and Youth need to write and approve specific guidelines on the elements of accessibility that are required as part of all the reconstruction and new construction projects in their respective fields, and set up an office with the responsibility of making sure that the accessibility standards are met in the new designs, and that they are not neglected during construction.

3. The National Public Housing Department needs to make sure that all the new public housing designs have accessibility elements. The increased cost needs to be estimated, so that it may be included in future budget plans.

4. The Central Election Commission needs to identify the accessibility level for all polling stations, estimate the cost of adaptations and include it in the budget plans for the 2009 national elections.

5. All municipalities need to include the budget for adaptations that systematically and gradually ensure accessibility in all public buildings in their annual budget projections.

6. The competent local government agencies need to take measures that ensure that the vehicles licensed for public transportation meet the accessibility standards.

7. The MLSAEO needs to propose changes to the National Action Plan, which as a minimum, need to cover the following domains: (a) better specify the responsible institutions for each measure; (b) change timelines for measures that have not been achieved; and (c) add the responsibility of the state agencies to the realization of the measures for which the NGOs are currently the only responsible parties.

AREA II. SERVICES

The Action Plan of the National Strategy on People with Disabilities includes 21 measures in the area of services. The measures cover a multitude of services related to health care and social services. Following a multidisciplinary approach, the institutions assigned to the implementation of these measures are from the fields of health care, social services and education both at the central and local government levels as well as NGOs. The following are the objectives of the NSPD that relate to services:

1. Prevent disability at the earliest possible stage through early detection, and treatment of the children 0-6 years of age.
2. Provide coordinated health and social services by the public and private institutions for the people with disabilities in accordance with a shared philosophy of rehabilitation and integration.
3. Ensure the financial and physical opportunities for the provision of basic health care services for people with severe disabilities in the whole territory of the county.
4. Provide services for the rehabilitation of functional, physical, psychological, social and economic limitations caused by inborn disabilities, accidents or chronic diseases to ensure the integration of people with disabilities in their families and in the community.
5. Provide information to people with disabilities, their family members, experts, and caregivers on assistive technology that may be used by people with disabilities. Meet their needs with assistive technology equipment. Ensure the use of assistive technology for people with disabilities.
6. Provide high-quality services by the local government in compliance with the national state policies on disability as required by the legislation on devolution.

RESULTS

The results are presented in two sections. The first section tracks the implementation of each measure based on the reports of the experts in the competent administrative structures and the NGO leaders. The second section presents the results of the survey conducted with the people with disabilities and family members that are related to the domains of this area.

IMPLEMENTATION OF 2007 TASKS, PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE

Prevention and Early Identification

Measure 1.1. Multidisciplinary teams will be established for the assessment of individuals with disabilities and preparation and evaluation of individual plans for rehabilitation and integration.

Timeline: Starting from 2004 - 2005

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health; (b) MLSAEO; (c) NGOs

Findings:

The primary type of assessment that determines the eligibility for the disability benefit or invalidity pension for people with disabilities continues to be medical, through the Medical Commission for the Determination of Ability to Work (MCDAW). The assessment is needs based and the process is very cumbersome. The changes provided in the Joint Order of the Ministry of Health and MLSAEO no. 382 (02/26/2007) which revised the lists of eligible conditions as well as the criteria for the determination of the disability did not address this measure. The process of multidisciplinary assessment has started in the development day and residential care centers as well as the mental health system. A recent study of ADRF⁵ on the implementation of service standards for people with disabilities determined that the non-profit organizations that have been accredited and licensed for service by the State Social Service as well as the day and residential care centers run by the central or local government use the multidisciplinary teams to assess the needs of the clients, prepare the individual plan and evaluate the progress of their work. Lack of regulations that describe the process of multidisciplinary assessment and collaboration of

⁵ ADRF (2008). Small Steps: Formative Evaluation of the Implementation of the Standards of Social Services for Individuals with Disabilities in the Residential and Day Care Centers and Related Protection and Fulfillment of Human Rights.

the multidisciplinary team has created an uneven development in different centers. A more involved role of the SSS is required to improve the quality of the process and the outcomes. Ministry of Health reports that, based on the 2006 Executive Order of the Minister of Health "On the Provision of Mental Health Services by a Multidisciplinary Team," multidisciplinary teams made up of a psychiatrist, a social worker or a psychologist, a nurse, and an occupational therapist have been set up in psychiatric hospitals and mental health clinics. No evaluation has been conducted on the effectiveness of their work. The National Center for the Raising, Development and Rehabilitation of Children in Tirana (under the Ministry of Health) provides multidisciplinary assessment for young children. The multidisciplinary teams consist of pediatricians, specialized educators, psychologists, psychiatrists and physical therapists. During 2007, the center conducted training workshops for the personnel of the Health Care Counseling Services for Mothers and Young Children, who provide care for the young infants and who are positioned to identify an innate disability. However, reports indicate that assessment in most of the centers, especially those outside the capital, is totally medical, and as such, it only addresses the medical needs of children with disabilities. The Regional Departments of Public Health do not report any efforts on changing this situation.

The Portage assessment tools were used by parents and teachers for 1,900 children in early childhood day care centers in nine cities of the country. Modified Portage assessment tools were used as a model of holistic assessment for the formulation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) in Tirane and Berat.

Status: Some progress

Measure 1.2 The biochemistry and molecular genetics laboratory will be established at the Tirana Obstetric and Gynecological Hospital.

Timeline: Starting from 2004 - 2005

Responsible institution: Ministry of Health

Findings:

The Molecular Biochemistry Lab and the Genetic Testing Lab at Tirana Obstetric and Gynecological Hospital are functioning. No indicators of its work (the number of people who sought assistance and funding for 2007) were provided for this report.

Status: Task completed

Measure 1.3. The Laboratory of Genetic Testing at the Children's Hospital will be upgraded and improved.

Timeline: Starting from 2004

Responsible institutions: a) Ministry of Health;
b) Institute of Health Care Insurance; c) NGOs

Findings:

No significant investments were done during 2007. The budget of the Laboratory of Genetic Testing is part of the "Mother Theresa" Tirana University Hospital Center, and it is not itemized. The lab is not well advertised, and few parents seek assistance, although the cost is relatively low (at about \$12.00). Many parents do not use the services of the lab: about 1,500 children are born in Albania every year with genetic diseases. Most of them are cases of talasemy, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy and Down syndrome.

Status: Some progress

Measure 1.4. Research on the early prevention of disability will be conducted. Information bulletins on early prevention and best practices in child-raising will be prepared and distributed.

Timeline: 2 times per year

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health;
(b) Ministry of Education and Science

Findings:

Both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as the regional departments in the respective fields in Vlore, Elbasan, Korce, Shkoder and Durres report that no research was conducted in the field of early identification and prevention of disabilities during 2007.

The National Center for the Raising, Development and Rehabilitation of Children publishes the magazine "Flowers of Life." The magazine is published four times a year and it covers issues related to child raising and child development.

There is doubt whether the published materials reach the intended audience in the country, as only the Department of Public Health in Shkoder reported to have distributed these materials (130 copies in all).

All the other regional departments of Public Health reported that they had no information whether any such materials existed. The Department for the Promotion of Health in the Institute of Public Health has not been adequately involved in the implementation of this measure.

Status: Very little progress

Collaborative Medical and Social Services

Measure 2.1 New services, such as day care services, family and community-based services aimed at the integration of people with disabilities will be provided

Timeline: 2005 - 2006 and continuously

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunity /State Social Service;
(b) Institute of Social Security; (c) Local Government Units

Findings:

According to statistics from the MLSAEO,⁶ the following was the situation during 2007:

Table 6: **Day and Residential Care Centers**

Location	Public Centers		Centers run by NGOs	Total
	Residential	Day		
Tirane	1	1	7	9
Durres	1	1	0	2
Korce	2	1	2	5
Elbasan	1	0	1	2
Shkoder	1	1	4	6
Vlore	1	1	0	2
Lezhe	1	0	1	2
Total	8	5	15	28

⁶ The statistics were retrieved 09/21/08 from the website of the MLSAEO at <http://www.mpcs.gov.al/statistikat>. These data do not present the full picture: for example the residential care center in Berat has not been included. Also, the table does not include people with special disabilities in residential care homes for children and seniors.

Table 7: Clients in Day and Residential Care Centers

Location	Public Centers	Centers run by NGOs	Total
Tirane	27	182	209
Durres	47		47
Korce	68	67	135
Elbasan	20	8	28
Shkoder	116	394	510
Vlore	22		22
Lezhe	25	9	34
Total	325	660	985

The World Bank funded project Distribution of Social Services in the Community has been directed towards the implementation of this measure. Additionally, collaboration with international donors and international organizations proved fruitful. As a result, as reported by the SSS, ten new community centers for people with intellectual disabilities (day care centers, and group homes) were opened during 2007 in Shkoder, Korce, Tirane, Berat, Elbasan, Vlore, and Tepelene. In addition, a new non-profit organization started offering services in the home of the people with disabilities in Shkoder. A new Mental Health Community Center was opened in Korce. Despite these achievements, there are still no community services for people with disabilities in the majority of the urban and rural centers in the country. Some of the reported challenges are lack of awareness of local politicians and lack of expertise in the area of disabilities among the staff of local government divisions of social services, in addition to lack of funding. Another barrier is lack of ownership of capital assets (land and/or building) by the local government.

The existing non-profit organizations in the field of social services are mostly located in the large urban centers and they started as a result of the collaboration with international donors. Although the process of Community Planning is underway in all the regions of the country, there are two major obstacles in the way of the even distribution of services for people with disabilities. The first relates to the lack of expertise/human resources in the field of disabilities and non-profit management. The second comes from the policies followed by the local government and the MLSAEO; there is no encouragement and funding source for a non-profit start-up through grants or long-term contracts.

Status: Some progress



Ersi Hyseni, diagnosed with autism and pervasive developmental delays, has benefited from the multidisciplinary assessment and the newly developed services in Tirane provided by "The Multidisciplinary Community Social Center for Children and Families in Need."

Ersi, who stayed at home with his mother as he was not admitted in regular kindergarten because he needed special support, was assessed by a pediatrician, a psychologist and a social worker.

While the pediatrician and the psychologists focused on Ersi and built an individual plan for him, the social worker focused on the family. Currently, Ersi goes to the day care center 'Primavera' where a development educator works with him daily on developing his age appropriate independent living skills based on his Individual Plan and includes Ersi in all the activities of the center.

Thanks to the efforts of the social worker, the family receives the caregiver benefit they are entitled to and both parents have a better understanding of autism and the support they need to provide for their daughter.

Measure 2.2.

New service models will be piloted and evaluated for their effectiveness. Needs assessment studies will be conducted for the expansion of services for people with disabilities.

Timeline:

2004 (pilot projects), 2007.

Responsible institutions:

- (a) MLSAEO/State Social Service;
- (b) local government;
- (c) Ministry of Health;
- (d) NGOs; (e) Tirana Municipality

Findings:

The Ministry of Health has piloted day care centers and group homes in the field of mental health. No evaluation has been done on the effectiveness of the models implemented. Additionally, no needs assessment study has been conducted on a national or regional level to determine the number of clients that need services and the location

of the future community mental health centers. The World Bank is funding several community service programs for children with intellectual disabilities in Tirane, Tepelene, Shkoder, Vlore and Durres as a model of community services and inclusive approach through the collaboration with the MLSAEO. The Projects' Unit in the MLSAEO (MLSAEO) monitors this project closely and will conduct its summative evaluation.

Several non-profit organizations also provided services in collaboration with international organizations, following a contemporary model of services, such as day care, group homes or home services.

The social service organizations were inspected regularly by the State Social Service Inspectorate. No study was conducted on the effectiveness of the models used. Each of the twelve regions (qarqe) was encouraged to do a community plan, which included needed services for people with disabilities. However, a national needs assessment study for the distribution of services according to the categories of disabilities, clients' age groups and local disability incidence has yet to be conducted.

Tirana municipality had plans to start services in the home of the clients, but the group ages were yet to be determined.

MLSAEO conducted studies on the readiness of the local government to take over the supervision of the new services as part of the devolution process. The studies have identified the main barrier as the lack of readiness of the local government to manage social services for people with disabilities.

Status: Some progress

Measure 2.3 New standards and regulations for service for people with disabilities will be written and approved. The standards and regulations will point out the right of the clients for appropriate services, which respect their dignity and are strengths-based.

Timeline: 2004-2005

Responsible institutions: a) Ministry of Labor;
b) Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity/State Social Service

Findings:

"The Standards of Services for People with Disabilities in Day and Residential Care Centers,"-Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) No. 822 (12/06/2006); "The Standards for Services for the Older People in Residential Care Centers," DCM No. 881

(12/06/2006) and "The Standards for Day Care Services for Older People," DCM No. 823 (12/06/2006) have created a good legal framework for the regulations of all the respective institutions. However, a study conducted by ADRF in 2008⁷ revealed that the regulations of day and residential care centers need to be updated to reflect the above mentioned standards and the requirements of this measure.

In December 2007, the rules for the determination of the disability were amended to include new childhood diseases as well as damage or loss of upper or lower extremities. The amendments increased the number of beneficiaries of the disability benefit.

Status: Good progress

Measure 2.4. Regulations for admission to the public residential care centers for persons with disabilities and older people will be reviewed to accommodate persons with severe disabilities whose needs cannot be met by their families.

Timelines: Starting in 2005

Responsible institutions: (a) MLSAEO; (b) local government; (c) NGOs

Findings:

DCM No. 114 (01/31/07) "On the Amount of the Financial Contribution of the Persons Placed in Residential Public Care" provided the regulatory framework for the financial contribution of the residents on a sliding scale (from free to full coverage of the cost), in accordance with clients' financial resources and assets.

Social Services in Vlore reported that new policies and operation standards were drafted for the Child Development Center; work was in progress in Durres and Shkoder. The placement in age-appropriate residential care of older adults who are currently living in the Development Centers for Children and Youth has yet to be addressed. In general, residential care for the adults with intellectual disabilities has not yet been covered in the policies of the MLSAEO or regional State Social Service Offices.

Status: Some progress

⁷ ADRF (2008). Small Steps: Formative Evaluation of the Implementation of the Standards of Social Services for Individuals with Disabilities in the Residential and Day Care Centers and Related Protection and Fulfillment of Human Rights.

Measure 2.5. Reduced fees for people with disabilities for public services will be initiated.

Timelines: 2005-2006

Responsible institutions: Local government.

Findings:

Categories of people with disabilities in Tirana (such as labor invalids and people with visual impairments) do not pay fares in the intercity public transportation system. None of the other social service divisions in the municipalities were able to report any data for this measure, checking the box of "no information available" instead.

Status: Very little progress

Measure 2.6. (a) Psycho-social counseling will be initially provided in 36 schools in Albania; (b) this service will be expanded to all the schools of Albania; (c) necessary infrastructure to work with students with special needs will be provided in schools.

Timelines: 2004 - 2010

Responsible institution: (a) Ministry of Education and Science;
(b) Regional Departments of Education; (c) NGOs

Findings:

Psychosocial counseling is now provided in all the city schools and the large rural schools in Albania. Psychologists have been appointed in most of the school districts. However, no information is available on their involvement with students with special needs.

The MES reports that many schools were equipped with the necessary infrastructure to serve students with special needs, although no specifications were made as to the nature of the infrastructure or the location of the equipped schools. Reports from the Regional Departments of Education provided information on physical adaptations of school environment. That ensures partial accessibility for wheelchair users. There is no available information on the number of resource rooms in the elementary and secondary schools. Lack of financial resources is cited as the main reason for not having done more in this area.

Status: Good progress

Health Care for People with Severe Disabilities

Measure 3.1. Regulations on the provision and distribution of medical supplies and motorized vehicles to people with severe disabilities will be reviewed. A dedicated budget line will be established for people with disabilities.

Timeline: 2004 - 2008

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health; (b) Health Insurance Institute

Findings:

The Health Insurance Institute fully reimburses the cost of all medication to people with para- and tetra-plegia for diseases caused by their main disabling condition. They get their medication free of charge. The reimbursing for all disabling conditions under the category of somatic diseases is partial, according to the list of medication approved annually by the Health Insurance Institute. The cost of the program was not reported by the Health Insurance Institute. The health insurance still does not cover the purchase and repairs of wheelchairs.

DCM No. 78 (02/07/2007) provided that all people with para-and tetra-plegia, determined as such by the MCDAW, are beneficiaries of a 9,000 lek per month (approximately \$104.00) to cover their needs for the necessary sanitary and hygienic expenses.

No changes were made re: legislation and policies regarding the use and funding of motorized vehicles, although the Association of Labor Invalids continued to advocate for them.

A specific budget line has not been dedicated to people with special needs. The cost for their services is spread over the budget of several institutions at the central and local level and it is not earmarked. As such, it is impossible to calculate.

Status: Some progress

Measure 3.2. The curriculum for the family practitioner will be revised. It will include material on severe and profound disabilities.

Timeline: Yearly

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health; (b) Health Insurance Institute

Findings:

No information was provided on the progress done in the implementation of this measure for 2007, either by the ministry of Health or the Regional Departments of Public Health. Lack of available information indicates that no progress was made.

Status: No progress

Measure 3.3. The options of covering the extra costs of providing the extended medical treatment to people with severe disabilities in general, and those with severe intellectual disabilities in particular will be studied.

Timeline: Yearly

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health; (b) Health Insurance Institute

Findings:

There is a practice of free medical care for people with severe and profound disabilities in the public health care centers and in their homes. Additionally, the clients in residential care centers with disabilities receive free health care (doctor's visits- both by generalists and specialists, and medication). The Ministry of Health reports that they have no information whether any studies were conducted during 2007 to calculate the cost of this care which is currently covered by the State Health Insurance system.

The Regional Departments of Public Health of Elbasan and Korce also report that they have no information either. The Regional Health Care Departments of Shkoder and Vlore report that they started work for the implementation of this measure by setting up task forces. No specifications were made as to the nature of the progress made by the task forces.

Status: No progress

Rehabilitation Services

Measure 4.1. A national program will be approved and implemented for the establishment and functioning of rehabilitation services. They will gradually spread over the whole territory of the Republic of Albania and will serve

all disability categories.

Timeline: 2005 - 2015

Responsible institutions: a) Ministry of Health; b) MLSAEO.

Findings:

Some indicators of achievement were reported in the area of physical therapy. In collaboration with Handicap International, the Ministry of Health prepared the National Physical Medical Rehabilitation (PMR) Action Plan for the period 2007-2011. The PMR action plan includes specifications on the development of policies, and the service delivery system, the preparation of specialized personnel, as well as the development of information and funding systems. The Action Plan contains objectives and measurable outcomes with the respective deadlines, responsibilities and resources for implementation.

The reconstructed first floor of Kukes Hospital (Northern Albania) houses the newly built physical therapy and prostheses wards. The equipment cost for the physical therapy ward is estimated at \$35,000. The State Department of the American government and the Albanian Mine Action Executive (known as AMAE) have donated materials for the construction of prostheses amounting at \$18,000. The first floor of the new hospital that is being built in Kavaja (Central Albania) will house a new physical rehabilitation center.

Work is in progress for the preparation of the medical personnel who will be involved in the PMR through physical therapy majors in public and private universities as well as specialization courses for the preparation of prostheses (6 specialists from Tirane, Kukes and Pogradec). Additionally, the curriculum was prepared for the one-year specialization course for the physical therapy doctor to be taught by French professors.

The National Rehabilitation Center for People with Visual Impairments, funded by the state budget, national and international donors and fee for service provides rehabilitation services for its clients. Ministry of Health funded the purchase of new assistive technology equipment for visual impairments at the amount of 12 million leke (\$143,850).

The Regional Departments of Public Health in Vlore, Korce, Shkoder and Durres report that they are not involved in the process. The situation seems different in Elbasan, where the Regional Department of Public health reports the opening of two new physical therapy centers.

No other rehabilitation professions such as occupational, music, and speech

therapy-to mention a few therapists exist in Albania. The state-run day care centers have positions described as "speech therapists" and "occupational therapists," which are filled with school teachers without the appropriate professional expertise.

Status: Some progress

Measure 4.2. An accreditation system will be created and implemented for the centers of early childhood care, rehabilitation and training for each of the categories of disabilities.

Timeline: Starting from 2005 -

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health; (b) MLSAEO.

Findings:

The Ministry of Health and its institutions have not been involved in the implementation of this measure, although the rehabilitation centers are part of the public health care system. The National Center of Quality, Safety and Accreditation of Health Institutions created in 2006 has not yet created an accreditation system for the physical therapy rehabilitation center. The Regional Departments of Public Health do not seem to be involved in the implementation of this measure as they either report to have no information, or no involvement. Even in the cases when the box "in progress" has been checked, as is the case of the Regional Departments of Shkoder and Vlore, no specifics have been given on the nature of progress. Since 2004, the State Social Service licenses all for-profit and non-profit organizations that provide social services. The State Social Services Inspectorate provides monitoring of these services through regular inspections. However, the system does not include a regular accreditation process built specifically for the various categories of disabilities and services with age-appropriate requirements.

Status: Some progress

Measure 4.3. At the central, regional or local level, new services will be created and existing ones will be adapted for people with disabilities.

Timeline: Starting in 2005

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health;
(b) MLSAEO/ State Social Service;
(c) Ministry of Education and Science;
(d) NGOs

Findings:

The 2005-2008 Action Plan of Mental Health Services gives priority to community services. Currently, there are nine day care centers, of which three are in Tirana, and the rest in Korce, Elbasan (two), Vlore, Berat, Gramsh and Peshkopi. In addition, there are 5 residential group homes in Shkoder, Tirane, Elbasan (two), and Vlore.

The Regional Offices of the SSS report to have personnel appointed to tend to disability issues. For more information on social services see 2.1 & 2.2.

For more information on the Ministry of Education and Science see 6.1.

The NGOs, such as ADRF, have provided assistance to the local government at the regional, municipality and commune level by organizing training workshops with the staff that will be involved in areas related to disabilities.

The regional departments of health in Elbasan, and Korce reported that no information was available on the implementation of this measure.

Status: Some progress

Assistive Technology

Measure 5.1. Assistive technology and adaptive equipment will be provided to people with disabilities. All social services centers and schools will be supplied with assistive technology, adaptive equipment and teaching aids.

Timeline: Starting from 2005

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health;
(b) MLSAEO/ State Social Service;
(c) Ministry of Education; (d) NGOs

Findings:

Ministry of Education and Science reported that all the special needs schools have been supplied with teaching aids which are appropriate for the respective disability categories. Schools order what they need at MES. Work has started to provide ability-appropriate teaching aids in the general education schools, as well.

The various NGOs have contributed to the day care centers through projects with international donors. For example, MEDPAK has delivered assistive technology and adaptive equipment to the day care center in Librazhd. Whereas, ADRF distributed 156 wheelchairs built in the workshop "Miresia" in 13 cities. The project

was funded by USAID as public health insurance still does not cover the cost for the purchase and repairs of wheelchairs.

The study conducted by ADRF⁸, in the state-run day care and residential centers run by the MLSAEO or the local government, identified an unmet need for adaptive equipment and assistive technology in all the centers.

Status: Little progress

Measure 5.2. The publication of brochures and informative materials on assistive technology for people with disabilities will be encouraged and supported. Exhibitions and fairs for assistive technology and adaptive equipment will be held.

Timeline: Starting from 2005 -

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health, (b) MLSAEO/State Social Service, (c) Ministry of Education, (d) NGOs

Findings:

No brochures and informative materials were published on assistive technology for people with disabilities by the Ministry of Health, MLSAEO and the Ministry of Education and Science. Made possible by a USAID grant, ADRF published and distributed 500 copies of a manual on how to use a wheelchair.

The National Center for the Rehabilitation of the Blind published a coursebook on teaching and learning Braille. No exhibitions or fairs for assistive technology and adaptive equipment were organized in the country. The Ministry of Education and Science and several of the Regional Departments of Public Health report that the main reason is lack of funding.

Status: Little progress

Measure 5.3. Specialized centers for assistive technology and adaptive equipment will be established and advertised.

Timeline; Starting from 2005

⁸ ADRF (2008). Small Steps: Formative Evaluation of the Implementation of the Standards of Social Services for Individuals with Disabilities in the Residential and Day Care Centers and Related Protection and Fulfillment of Human Rights.

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health; (b) Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity/ State Social Service; (c) Ministry of Education and Science; (d) NGOs

Findings:

A fund of 25 million lek (approximately \$ 289,911) was granted by the Ministry of Health for the construction of a new workshop for the production of prostheses and orthoses at the Military Hospital. Additionally, the physical therapy rehabilitation centers served as specialized centers for assistive technology and adaptive equipment. The centers are promoted through "word of mouth" as no related advertising took place during 2007.

The factory "Miresia" (an activity of ADRF supported by USAID grants) produced 156 wheelchairs that were distributed nationally based on request). The wheelchair availability was advertised through an information packet (500 copies). Additionally, 33 wheelchair users and their family members participated in an active rehabilitation camp where the use of wheelchairs in various settings was demonstrated and practiced.

MEDPAK, in collaboration with the center "Focus," provided information to families about the existing adaptive equipment for their family members with a disability. However, due to high costs of such equipment, very few families chose to buy them.

The National Rehabilitation Center for People with Visual Impairments continued to serve as a specialized center for assistive technology and adaptive equipment for people with visual impairments supported by the state budget. No data are available on the number of people served during 2007.

The Regional Departments of Health of Elbasan, Korce, Shkoder and Vlore had no information on developments in their regions. One of the barriers identified was lack of trained personnel in the field of assistive technology.

Status: Little progress

Community Services

Measure 6.1. Specific administrative units will be created to provide and oversee services for people with disabilities at the central, regional and local government.

Timeline: Starting from 2004

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health; (b) Ministry of Local Government; (c) MLSAEO; (d) Ministry of Education and Science

Findings:

There are no administrative units or specialists assigned to deal with and follow up on issues related specifically to people with disabilities in the Ministry of Health, its institutions and the Regional Departments of Public Health. There is only a contact person at the Ministry of Health who collaborates with the Technical Secretariat at the MLSAEO.

There is a Technical Secretariat, composed of three specialists, at the MLSAEO, which has made efforts to encourage creation of national network of administrative structures and contact persons for services for people with disabilities.

All social welfare units at the municipalities and communes have personnel who administer the disability economic assistance, whose main responsibility is to make sure that the documentation meets the requirements and present this documentation to the Council for approval of the benefit. Some of the units have appointed persons particularly for this duty. However, with the exception of Tirana and Durres social services unit specialists, none of them have received any particular training to work with people with disabilities and their families, and they do not provide any support to them.

The social welfare units in Tirane, Korce, Berat, Vlore, and Shkoder became responsible for the supervision of the five state-run residential centers in their municipalities as part of the process of devolution.

The Ministry of Education and Science reports that structures that deal with students with special needs have been created at every level: school, Department of Education, Regional Department of Education and MES. No specifications were provided on the responsibilities of these structures.

Training for the staff of the local government was provided by ADRF, through a grant of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). During 2007, it conducted 18 training workshops on the Standards of Services for People with Disabilities in Tirane, Shkoder, Durres, Korce, Berat and Vlore. Representatives from the local social service offices as well as staff from the day and residential care centers (n=281) attended the workshops. ADRF also conducted 12 training workshops on the implementation of the Action Plan of the National Strategy on Persons with a Disability in Tirane, Shkoder, Durres, Vlore, Elbasan and Korce, where 154 stakeholders at the local level took part. The training workshops were funded by USAID.

However, reports from the local offices of social services indicate that formal training is needed for people who start new responsibilities with a curriculum that contains content on disabilities, services for people with disabilities, and the legal framework.

Status: Some progress

Measure 6.2. Foster care and care for a family member will become the alternative to institutional care for people with severe disabilities. Training will be provided for the family caretakers of person with hearing and visual impairments.

Timeline: Starting in 2005

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Health; (b) MLSAEO/ State Social Service; (b) MES; (c) NGOs.

Findings:

Care for a family member at home is the only alternative of care for most of the families, who have one or more members with a severe disability. The main assistance for families continues to be in the form of cash payment. During 2007, 55,754 people received the disability benefit: 10, 407 (18.7%) people with visual impairments, 2,046 (3.7%) people with para- and tetra-plegia, and 43,301 (77.7%) people with severe intellectual and physical disabilities. About one third, 28.9% (16, 097) were children 0-18 years of age. Of the school-age children (n= 13,033), only 65.2% (n= 8,499) attended school.⁹ The disability benefit was 8,000 lek per month (about \$ 93.00) and the state spent 5,273,536,000 leke (\$61,154,000). Labor invalids (n= 44,852), received through the system of social security a total of 1,262,832,000 leke (\$14,644,000) in invalidity pensions (i.e., social security disability).

About one fourth (23%) of the families whose family member who received disability benefit (n=12, 842) also received the family caregiver benefit. The family caregiver benefit was 8,000 leke (about \$93.00) for one family member with a disability and 12,000 leke (\$139.00) for more than one member with a disability. Most of the family caregivers provided care for individuals with severe intellectual and physical disabilities (n=7,522; 58.6%), individuals with visual impairments (n= 3,370; 26.2%) and individuals with para- and tetra-plegia (n=1,950; 15.2%). A total fund of 12,842 leke

⁹ From the Website of the MLSAEO. Retrieved on 09/21/08 from <http://www.mpcs.gov.al/statistikat>.

(\$12,114,000) was spent on this benefit.

Training of family caregivers to provide care for their family members with a disability is totally left to the NGOs. During 2007, MEDPAK, "Ndihamoni Jeten," "Shtepia e Kuqe," "Une Jam si Ju," and other non-profit organizations provided training workshops for families who have a child with a disability. The National Association of People with Visual Impairments prepared the training workshops to be offered in 2008.

Steps forward were made in turning foster care to an alternative to institutionalization. A DCM was prepared with an Action Plan for the implementation of foster care policies for 2008-2010. As part of the action plan, 15 children with disabilities in Tirane and Shkoder will be placed in foster care.

Ministry of Education and Science does not recognize a role in the implementation of this measure.

Status: Some progress

Measure 6. 3. Promotion of non-residential care to reduce the demand for residential care.

Timeline: 2010

- Responsible institutions:*
- (a) Ministry of Health;
 - (b) MLSAEO/ State Social Service;
 - (c) Ministry of Education and Science;
 - (d) NGOs;
 - (e) local government

Findings:

Ministry of Health has already started working on this measure by promoting the model of community care for people with mental illness. See 6.1 for more information.

One of the goals of working with children with intellectual disabilities in Residential Development Centers, as well as children with physical disabilities in the center "God Loves Albania" is to return children home after a period of rehabilitation. Some centers have encountered difficulty, in particular, with adults whose families do not have any ties with them. Two non-profit associations in Shkoder are working to place these individuals in group homes for up to eight individuals (called "family homes"). The number of adults moving to group homes during 2007 not available.

The year 2007 was characterized by a low number of children with disabilities attending special education or general education schools, a very small number of day

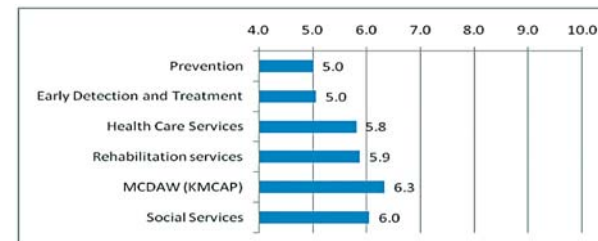
care centers and their concentration in the main cities in Albania, and very few options for community living for a very small number of adults in very few urban centers.

Status: Very little progress

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY CONDUCTED WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS

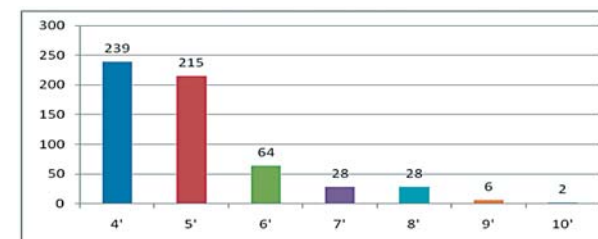
The participants in the survey, 464 people with disabilities and 458 family members were asked to grade the current situation related to six spheres in the area of medical and social services using the Albanian grade system from 4-10. Although the mode grade for all the questions was 4 (i.e., fail), the cluster of questions received a mean grade of 5.7. The participants were especially concerned with the insufficient work done in the areas of prevention and early identification, which received a mean grade of 5. The assessment service MCDAW received a higher rating, which still is far from being satisfactory. Figure 14 illustrates the findings:

Fig. 14. Mean grades per topic related to services.



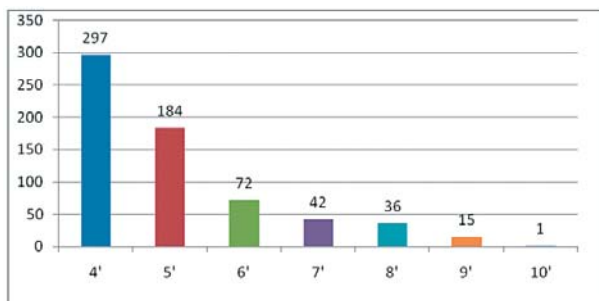
The distribution of grades for each of the areas is uneven and skewed towards fours (4) and fives (5) as the following charts illustrate. That means that most of the survey participants believe the situation to be unsatisfactory.

Fig. 15. Prevention



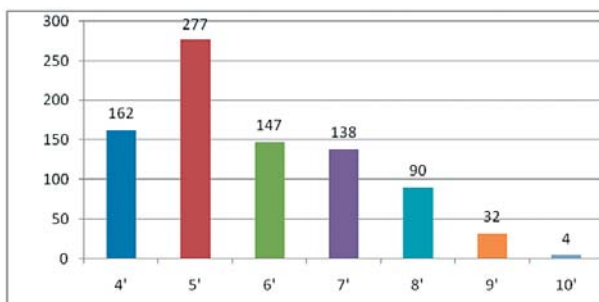
N = 582
M = 5.00
SD = 1.18

Fig. 16. **Early identification and treatment**



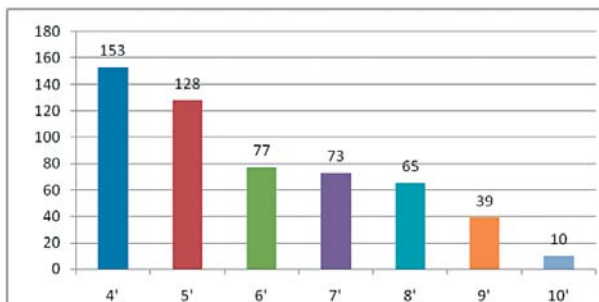
N= 647
M= 5.95
SD= 1.32

Fig. 17. **Health care services**



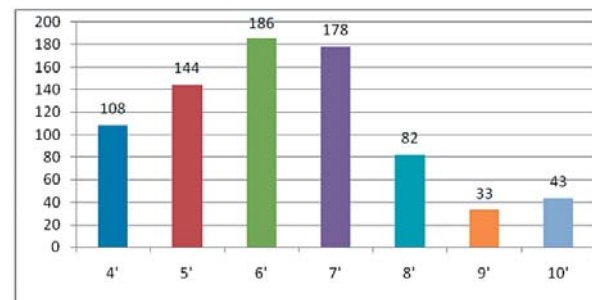
N=850
M=5.80
SD=1.43

Fig. 18. **Rehabilitation services**



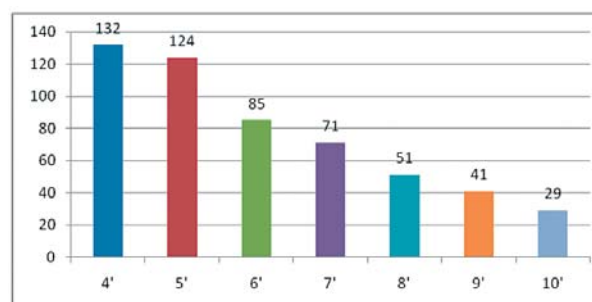
N=545
M=5.86,
SD= 1.43

Fig. 19. **MCDAW (KMCAP)**



N= 774
M= 6.33,
SD= 1.60

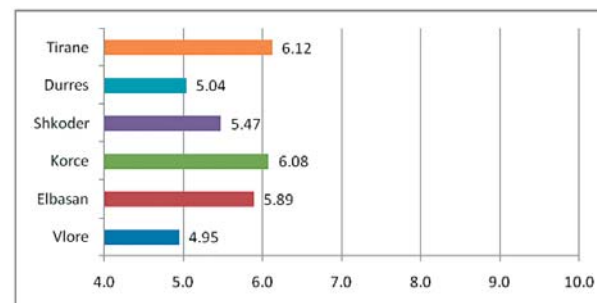
Fig. 20. **Social Services**



N=533
M=6.05
SD= 1.82

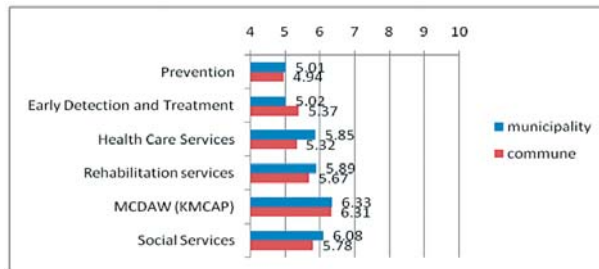
The perception differs for different regions, with people living in Tirane and Korce indicating a somewhat higher satisfaction as indicated by the higher mean grade (respectively 6.12 and 6.08) than people living in the other regions. The people of Vlore gave the cluster a failing grade of 4.95.

Fig. 21. **Mean grades per region**



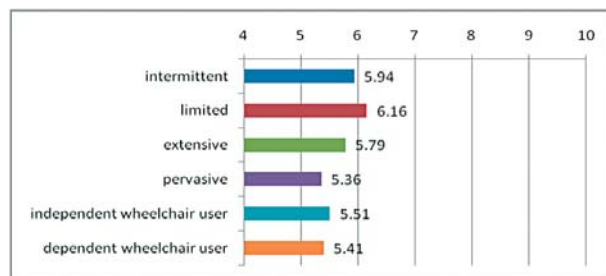
People living in rural areas had lower satisfaction with the services in general, with one exception, Early Identification, as Figure 12 illustrates. The t-tests performed showed a statistically significant difference in the topic of health care services only ($p=0.000$, equal variance not assumed).

Fig. 22. Mean grades compared by location



The degree of need also has an impact on the perception on the satisfaction with the situation. The situation seems worse for family members and individuals with pervasive needs, and for the dependent wheelchair users, who gave the cluster a lower mean grade of 5.36 and 5.41 respectively, as Figure 23 illustrates. This means that they encounter more difficulties in general.

Fig. 23. Mean grades by each category of needs



DISCUSSION

Not much progress was done in the area related to prevention and early identification. Although there are two laboratories for genetic testing, they are both in Tirana and seem not be well-advertised. The status of maternal health care is poor and many mothers give birth at home, but the Action Plan has no

measures related to improvement of maternal health care and delivery conditions. There is a National Center for the Raising, Development and Rehabilitation of Children in Tirana, but its impact is not national. The Regional Departments of Health did not seem to be really involved, as many of them reported to have no information on these topics. During 2007, parents received no or very little information on early childhood development and best practices in child-raising. No research was done in the country on prevention and early identification. The assessment continued to be mostly medical, and plans for rehabilitation and integration were done for a very small percentage of the people with disabilities who attended day care services. In summary, the results are far from being satisfactory for Objective One: "Prevent disability at the earliest possible stage through early detection, and treatment of the children 0-6 years of age." The parents and people with disabilities who participated in the survey gave it a 5.00, a very low grade. Table 8 gives the status or progress for each measure.

Table 8: Status of Progress for Objective One: Prevention and Early Identification

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
1.1. Multidisciplinary teams will be established for the assessment of individuals with disabilities and preparation and evaluation of individual plans for rehabilitation and integration.	2004 - 2005	Ministry of Health Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity NGOs	Some progress.
1.2. The biochemistry and molecular genetics laboratory will be established at the Tirana Obstetric and Gynecological Hospital.	2004 - 2005	Ministry of Health	Task completed.
1.3. The Laboratory of Genetic Testing at the Children's Hospital will be upgraded and improved.	Starting from 2004	Ministry of Health Institute of Health Care Insurance NGOs	Some progress.

1.4. Research on the early prevention of disability will be conducted. Information bulletins on early prevention and best practices in child-raising will be prepared and distributed.	2 Times per year	Ministry of Health Ministry of Education and Science	Very little progress.
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Some progress was noted towards the fulfillment of the second objective, "Provide coordinated health and social services by the public and private institutions for the people with disabilities in accordance with a shared philosophy of rehabilitation and integration." New community mental health centers were opened, as well as day care services for people with intellectual disabilities and the psycho-social services in schools were extended in all major cities. However, the services are not located in all the geographic areas of the country, they are located in major cities only, and they do not cover all categories of people with disabilities according to age groups and type of disability. Also, the new models have not been evaluated for their effectiveness. Other measures, such as the reduction of fees, have been only partially implemented. Another noteworthy conclusion from the study of data is that there is no collaboration in the activities among the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, and MLSAEO, which is in the spirit of this objective. Table 9 provides the status of progress for each measure.

Table 9: **Status of Progress for Objective Two: Collaborative Health and Social Services**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
2.1. New services, such as day care services, family and community-based services aimed at the integration of people with disabilities will be provided.	2005-2006 continuously	Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity/State Social Service Institute of Social Security Local Government Units	Some progress.

2.2. New service models will be piloted and evaluated for their effectiveness. Needs assessment studies will be conducted for the expansion of services for people with disabilities.	2004 (pilot projects), 2007	Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity/ State Social Services Local government Ministry of Health NGOs Tirana Municipality	Some progress.
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2.3. New standards and regulations for service for people with disabilities will be written and approved. The standards and regulations will point out the right of the clients for appropriate services, which respect their dignity and are strengths-based.	2004-2005	Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity/ State Social Service	Good progress.
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2.4. Regulations for admission to the public residential care centers for persons with disabilities and older people will be reviewed to accommodate persons with severe disabilities whose needs cannot be met by their families.	2005	Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity Local government NGOs	Some progress.
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2.5. Reduced fees for people with disabilities for public services will be initiated.	2005-2006	Local government	Very little progress.
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2.6. Psycho-social counseling will be initially provided in 36 schools in Albania. This service will be expended to all the schools in Albania. Necessary infrastructure to work with students with special needs will be provided in schools.	2004-2010	Ministry of Education and Science Regional Departments of Education NGOs	Good progress.
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Although all people with severe disabilities receive free basic medical care, as well as subsidized medications, no progress has been made for the three measures related to the objective "Ensure territorial, financial and physical opportunities for the provision of basic health care services for people with severe disabilities," as Table 10 shows. Clearly, the Ministry of Health and the Health Insurance Institute have yet to show their interest in implementing the measures of this objective.

Table 10: **Status of Progress for Objective Three: Health Care for People with Severe Disabilities**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
3.1. Regulations on the provision and distribution of medical supplies and motorized vehicles to people with severe disabilities will be reviewed. A dedicated budget line will be established for people with disabilities.	2004-2008	Ministry of Health Health Insurance Institute	No progress.
3.2. The curriculum for the family practitioner will be revised. It will include material on severe and profound disabilities.	Yearly	Ministry of Health Health Insurance Institute	No progress.
3.3. The options of covering the extra costs of providing the extended medical treatment to people with severe intellectual disabilities in particular will be studied.	Yearly	Ministry of Health Health Insurance Institute	No progress.

Some progress has been made towards expanding the physical rehabilitation services with the preparation of the National Physical Medical Rehabilitation (PMR) Action Plan for the period 2007-2011, the opening of new physical therapy wards and the preparation of physical therapists. The service has yet to be spread out all over the territory. There is no accreditation system for the physical therapy service yet. The development day care centers and residential care centers also provide rehabilitation services, but they,

too, are not spread all over the country and only serve a small number of people. Some non-profit organizations have been created with the support of foreign donors, but their future is insecure without the support funds. In conclusion, some progress has been made towards the implementation of the fourth objective, "Provide services towards the rehabilitation of functional, physical, psychological, social and economic limitations caused by inborn disabilities, accidents or chronic diseases to with ensure the integration of people with disabilities in the family and in the community," but much more needs to be done for its full implementation, especially in the geographical distribution of the services.

Table 11: **Status of Progress for Objective Four: Rehabilitation Services**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
4.1. A national program will be approved and implemented for the establishment and functioning of rehabilitation services. They will gradually spread over the whole territory of the Republic of Albania and will serve all disability categories.	2005-2015	Ministry of Health Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity.	Very good progress.
4.2. An accreditation system will be created and implemented for the centers of early childhood care, rehabilitation and training for each of the categories of disabilities.	2005	Ministry of Health Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity	Some progress.
4.3. At the central, regional or local level, new services will be created and existing ones will be adapted for people with disabilities.	2004	Ministry of Health Ministry of Local Government Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity Ministry of Education and Services	Some progress.

Very little progress has been done in the field of assistive technology and equipment both in informing people with disabilities and their family members of their variety and in supplying people with special needs with them as Table 12 indicates. There are two barriers in this area: the cost of equipment and lack of specialized personnel. The need has become evident in development day and residential care centers in particular. The results for the implementation of the fifth objective (Provide information to people with disabilities, their family members, experts, and caregivers on assistive technology that may be used by people with disabilities. Meet their needs with assistive technology equipment. Ensure the use of assistive technology for people with disabilities) are far from being satisfactory.

Table 12: **Assistive Technology**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
5.1. Assistive technology and adaptive equipment will be provided to people with disabilities. All social services centers and schools will be supplied with assistive technology, adaptive equipment and teaching aids.	2005	Ministry of Health Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity/State Social Service Ministry of Education and Science NGOs	Little progress.
5.2. The publication of brochures and informative materials on assistive technology for people with disabilities will be encouraged and supported. Exhibitions and fairs for assistive technology and adaptive equipment will be opened.	2005	Ministry of Health Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity/State Social Service Ministry of Education and Science NGOs	Little progress.
5.3. Specialized centers for assistive technology and adaptive equipment will be established and advertised.	2005	Ministry of Health Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity/State Social Service Ministry of Education and Science NGOs	Little progress.

The last objective in this area is relevant to the devolution process in the field of social services, "Provide high-quality services by the local government in compliance with the national state policies on disability as required by the legislation on devolution." Some progress has been done in certain areas such as passing the responsibility of supervision residential care centers (with the exception of that of Durres) to the local government. Also, the local government is involved in the distribution of the disability benefit. But the staff at the local level lacks the proper training to work in the field of disabilities and a vision of case management services has yet to be built at the central and local level.

Care for a family member is the main and in most case the only de-facto form of services, as the number of residential and day care centers is very small. Although the disability benefit and the family caregiver benefit are an encouragement towards non-institutionalization, the people with disabilities in family care receive no rehabilitation services at all. They are isolated socially and very often viewed as a burden for all. Family caregivers are not trained, and after a lifetime commitment of service, have no medical insurance and receive no social security upon retirement age.

Table 13: **Community Services**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
6.1. Specific administrative units will be created to provide and oversee services for people with disabilities at the central, regional and local government.	2005	Ministry of Health Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity/State Social Service Ministry of Education and Science NGOs	Some progress.
6.2. Foster care and care for family members will become the alternative to institutional care for people with severe disabilities. Training will be provided for the family caretakers of the person with hearing and visual impairments.	2005	Ministry of Health Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity/State Social Service MES NGOs	Some progress.

6.3. Non-residential care will be promoted to reduce the demand for residential care.	2010	Ministry of Health Ministry of Labor Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity/State Social Service Ministry of Education and Science NGOs Local government	Very little progress.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations listed below address the lack of achievements in the various domains of this area and provide necessary steps that would guarantee carrying out the National Action Plan measures within schedule.

1. The State Social Services and the Ministry of Health need to develop procedures for the monitoring of the quality of the assessment by the multidisciplinary teams in residential and day care centers that offer services to people with disabilities.
2. The Ministry of Health and the Institute of Medical Insurance need to fund public education campaigns to promote the existing services for the prevention of disabilities through genetic testing, as well as and their early identification.
3. The number of alternative community services for people will disabilities needs to be increased by planning their even geographic distribution and covering all types of disabilities.
4. The MLSAEO, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Health, as well as specialized NGOs need to assist in enhancing the capacity and the expertise of the human resources that will be managing the social services for people with disabilities at the regional and local level in the respective offices.
5. The process of passing the assets of the former national residential care centers over to the local government that will supervise and manage them needs to be sped up.

6. The State Social Service needs to develop appropriate procedures for the systematic monitoring of the implementation of the Standards of Services for People with Disabilities.
7. The MLSAEO, the State Social Services and the competent local government agencies need to reevaluate the eligibility criteria of people with disabilities in the residential and day development centers, taking into account the needs for support, age and social status.
8. The Ministry of Education and Science needs to provide funds for the creation of resource rooms in regular education schools and the purchase of the necessary modified teaching aids.
9. The study for the estimation of the health care cost for people with severe disabilities must be completed without delay, so that the families who incur the costs may be reimbursed by the medical insurance.
10. The rehabilitation services need to be expanded geographically and plans need to be made to introduce occupational, speech, art and music therapies as new forms of services.
11. The Ministry of Health and the MLSAEO must develop, without delay, an accreditation system for rehabilitation centers and other service agencies in the field of disabilities.
12. The responsible government agencies at the central and local level must plan the necessary funds for the purchase of adaptive equipment for the centers that provide service for people with disabilities.
13. The MLSAEO and the Ministry of Health need to earmark funds from their budgets to build new centers that produce and distribute adaptive equipment and sponsor the existing ones.

AREA III. EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The National Strategy on People with Disabilities has treated the education of people with disabilities in general, and vocational training in particular, as two pillars that support the employment of people with disabilities. The existing legislation has addressed the issues of the employment of people with disabilities, their vocational training and education. The Action Plan of the National Strategy on People with Disabilities has one objective related to employment, one related to vocational training, four objectives on education, and one objective on the participation in artistic, cultural and sports activities. The following is the list of the objectives:

1. Improve policies on the employment of people with disabilities and implement them effectively.
2. Improve the policies and programs for vocational education and training of people with disabilities.
3. Ensure the education of all students with disabilities by giving the priority to inclusive education.
4. Improve and modernize the educational process in the special education schools.
5. Create inclusive schools and kindergartens¹⁰ and gradually increase their numbers
6. Create the psycho-social and educational services in some schools and kindergartens, and gradually expand these services in all schools.

¹⁰ In Albania, kindergartens, which are part of the educational system, are attended by children 3-6 years of age.

7. Support the involvement of people with disabilities in artistic, cultural and sports activities at the local, national and international level.

RESULTS

The results of the evaluation study on the degree of implementation of the National Action Plan in the field of education, employment and vocational training are presented in two sections in the form of findings. The first section consists of the report on the work done for each measure according to the area of intervention and respective objective. Timelines and responsible institutions have also been spelled out to provide the context for the measure. The findings come from the reports prepared by the experts of various ministries at the central level, the questionnaires completed by experts at the regional and local level in Tirane, Durres, Shkoder, Korce, Vlore and Elbasan, as well as NGOs that participated in the study (MEDPAK, the Association of Albanian Invalids, ANAD, and ADRF). The second part of this section provides data from the six-region surveys with people with disabilities and family members illustrated with tables and charts.

IMPLEMENTATION OF 2007 TASKS, PREPARATION FOR FUTURE TASKS

Employment

Measure 1.1. Studies will be conducted on the status of employment of people with disabilities as well as job opportunities for them in the labor market.

Timeline: Starting in 2004

Implementing institutions: Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities/ State Employment Service

No specific studies have been conducted on the status of employment of people with disabilities and their job opportunities in the labor market. However, people with disabilities were included in a study of the labor market in general, although experts from the Regional Labor Office in Tirana noted that some of the questions were not relevant to people with disabilities. According to national statistics provided by the National Disability Monitor¹¹, 505 people with disabilities registered as job seekers in 2007 and 15.8% of them (n=80) were successful in obtaining employment. The Regional Labor Office in Tirana reports that 22 people with disabilities (38.6% of the 57 job seekers with a disability registered in this

¹¹ National Disability Monitor (2008). National Report on Disability in Albania for 2007.

office) found employment. However, this number is very small (only 0.4%) when compared to 5,341 people who got employed. According to the statistics of the MLSAEO¹², 1.3% of all the registered unemployed people (n= 142,871) are people with disabilities (n=1,838).

Status: Very little progress

Measure 1 2. Encourage and support the creation of protected jobs for people with disabilities and ensure transportation for inclusive employment.

Timeline: Starting from 2004

Implementing institutions: MLSAEO/ State Labor Service

Findings:

The reports from the regional labor offices of Tirana, Durres, Shkoder, Korce, Elbasan and Vlore as well as from the National Employment Service indicate that although people with disabilities are in the job seekers registry, the labor offices are very knowledgeable of the current legislation that provides the stimuli for the employment of people with disabilities¹³ and they have promoted awareness among employers, they have not been in a position to create protected jobs for people with disabilities (although they have been successful in assisting some people with disabilities to find employment) for two reasons. First, most of the companies are small and have less than 25 employees. Second, although the MLSAEO reported that 50 million lek (\$590,533) were planned to stimulate the employment of people from the at-risk categories, the labor offices in Korce and Elbasan expressed concerns on the lack of funding for stimulation as provided by law.

Reports from the labor offices reveal that there are no specific divisions in the labor offices that deal with people with disabilities and none of their employees have any specific training on providing job counseling, and job development for people with disabilities. In addition, there is no expertise on supported employment. These may be other deterrents to the employment of people with disabilities.

Status: No progress

¹² From the Website of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity. Retrieved on 09/21/08 from <http://www.mpcs.gov.al/statistikat>.

¹³ All the completed questionnaires had references to Law No. 7995 (9/20/1995) "On the Stimulation of Employment" amended moot recently with the Law No. 9570 (07/03/2006), DCM No. 632 (09/18/2003) "On the Program for the Stimulation of the Employment of Female Job Seekers," and DCM No. 69 (02/11/1998) "On the Program of the Stimulation of Employment for Unemployed Job Seekers."

Measure 1.3. Reform the benefit and pension schemes for people with disabilities to avoid conflicts with current labor market policies.

Timeline: Starting from 2005 -

Implementing institutions: MLSAEO / State Insurance Institute

Findings:

Although MLSAEO reported that work was in progress to address this measure, no specifications were given on the nature of progress. The regional offices of the ISS, in Durres and Elbasan, reported that this is an issue has never been brought up for discussion.

Status: No progress

Measure 1.4. Open special centers for the employment of people with disabilities.

Timeline: Starting from 2005

Implementing institutions: (a) MLSAEO/ State Employment Service; (b) NGOs

Findings:

None of the respondents from the regional labor offices were aware of the special centers for the employment of people with disabilities (such as sheltered workshops, etc.) in their region even in the cases when these centers have been open for some years now like those in Tirana, Elbasan and Korce. This disconnect brings to light the lack of genuine interest in the employment related issues of people with disabilities on the part of these offices, which were raised in the questionnaires completed by the NGOs that represent the interests of people with disabilities.

According to ADRF study¹⁴, in 2007, there were 88 adults with disabilities, mostly intellectual disabilities, who were working in sheltered employment settings. This is a very small number if compared with the number of adults with intellectual and physical disabilities who received the disability benefit (n= 27,204). The reports from the social welfare offices of the municipalities made known that no

¹⁴ ADRF (2008). Small Steps: Formative Evaluation of the Implementation of the Standards of Social Services for Individuals with Disabilities in the Residential and Day Care Centers and Related Protection and Fulfillment of Human Rights.

funds were provided or earmarked for the opening of the sheltered employment centers.

Table 14: **Adults in Sheltered Employment**

Name	City	Number of Clients
Atelie	Korce	23
Lira	Berat	12
Ndihmoni Jeten	Tirane	28
Balashë (physical)	Elbasan	25

Additionally, six people with physical disabilities are working in the "Miresia" wheelchair producing shop run by ADRF.

Status: Very little progress

Measure 1.5. Find effective ways to obligate the employers to implement the existing legislation for the employment of people with disabilities.

Timeline: 2004-2005

Implementing institutions: MLSAEO/ State Employment Service

Findings:

Although the strategy assigns the responsibility for this measure to the State Employment Service, some of the respondents noted that this is under the authority of the Labor Inspectorate. Nevertheless the experts from the MLSAEO, and the Regional Labor Offices explained that there are many barriers for the implementation of this measures: (a) The Ministry of Finance has not yet given the green light to the creation of the National Employment Fund; (b) the Labor offices have been recommend to implement the Sectorial Strategy on Employment and Vocational Training, but they have not been given an action plan; (c) the MLSAEO has yet to prepare the detailed instructions for ways of achieving this.

Status: No progress

Vocational Training

Measure 2.1. Revise the system of vocational rehabilitation and training for people with disabilities in compliance with the demands of the job market.

Timeline: Starting in 2005

Implementing institutions: MLSAEO/ State Employment Service

Findings:

The MLSAEO reports that work has started on the implementation of this measure. A group of experts are writing an Action Plan. The National Employment Office provided no information on its involvement. People with disabilities are eligible for free vocational training in the state run centers of vocational training and the Regional Labor Office of Durres reports that they are treated as a priority. The Regional Labor Office of Shkoder reports that the curriculum has been adapted to meet the special needs of the students with disabilities and the course instructors have received training on appropriate methods of instruction. These changes have proved effective: 23 people with disabilities were trained during 2007. There are no official statistics on the number of people with disabilities who received training on a national scale.

Status: Very little progress

Measure 2.2. In collaboration with employers, develop opportunities for employment, vocational counseling and support services for people with disabilities.

Timeline: Starting in 2005 and ongoing

Implementing institution: MLSAEO/ State Employment Service

Findings:

As seen by the small number of people with disabilities that have found employment, very little progress has been made in the implementation of this measure, although MLSAEO reports that there is a program for the stimulation of employment, job development and job counseling are offered at all labor office as functional duties of all employment services and people with disabilities are treated with priority within the criteria determined in the job mediation practices. The reports from the regional labor offices identify several issues. First, many people with disabilities who are job seekers only have the mandatory eight year education (n=1,301) and they are not competitive

in the job market. Second, people with disabilities do not feel comfortable dealing with the labor system and they send family members to the labor offices. Third, the employers have difficulty creating jobs for people with disabilities. Fourth, some employers show no interest in hiring people with disabilities. Fifth, there is no funding to encourage the employers. An analysis of these issues raised by the labor offices reveals the lack of specialized work by specialized staff in job development, and on-the job training for people with disabilities. Additionally, no support services have been developed in any of the labor offices to provide employment consultation for vocational rehabilitation, job development and on-the job training for people with disabilities. Some Albanian and international companies in Albania, such as Infsoft and Vodafone have taken the initiative and are setting a good example by developing appropriate jobs for people with disabilities and encouraging their further training. A better collaboration of the labor offices with other employers may create the necessary conditions for the employment of individuals with disability with a college degree (n=14 during 2007) and individuals with a disability with degrees from vocational education schools (n=278)¹⁵.

Status: No progress



Emiljano Lule from Tirana was a student in computer Science when he lost his eyesight. He later majored in Psychology but pursued his love of computers by using special programs for people with visual impairments. Impressed by his skills, INFOSOFT GROUP not only offered him a job, but also gave him the opportunity to finish his courses and obtain

a degree in data system management. Thanks to the adaptations in the work environment, Emiljano has been able to be successful at work. Emiljano considers the opportunity to work as a life changing experience. Having a job has not only had a positive impact on his economic situation, but has increased his self-esteem as well. He now considers himself to be an equal partner who is respected and valued for his contribution. He is aware that he will have other challenges in the future, but having a job has given him the necessary courage and strength.

¹⁵ The source of information is the National Employment Office.

Inclusive Education

Measure 3.1. Approve a new school curriculum that encourages inclusion.
Timeline: 2004-2006
Responsible institution: Ministry of Education and Science

The new curriculum for the mandatory nine-year education has been approved and all the textbooks for all subjects have been prepared. According to the experts of the Ministry of Education and Science, the criteria for the development and approval of the new curricula have stimulated inclusive processes.

However, reports from the regional department of education in Elbasan state that there are difficulties in the implementation of the curricula for students with special needs integrated in the general education classrooms. Also, disability related content is sparse in the new textbooks.

Status: Task completed, but improvements are needed to encourage the inclusion of students with special needs.

Measure 3.2. Prepare a packet with practical guidelines, teaching materials and standards for the integration of students with special needs for the public schools.
Timelines: 2004-2006
Responsible institution: Ministry of Education and Science

According to the report of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Institute of Curricula and Teacher Training prepared a packet with practical instructions and teaching materials for teachers and parents. No data were made available on the categories of special needs, group ages, and school subjects addressed in this packet.

"Save the Children" published guidelines on the how to write inclusive development plans for schools.

Status: Some progress

Measure 3.3. Prepare and approve a normative act that regulates the individual educational plan (IEP), and specifies the admission rules for students with special needs as well as their assessment procedures.
Timelines: 2004-2006
Responsible institution: Ministry of Education and Science

At the end of the school year 2007-2008, the Ministry of Education and Science reported that a task force had been created to work on this measure. This is two years after the scheduled time.

The reports from the regional departments of education reveal that the lack of this normative act has created issues in monitoring the progress of students with special needs. The absence of the regulation of the assessment procedures and the IEP process and document has created further blocks to the inclusion of students with special needs in mainstream education.

Status: No progress

Measure 3.4. Create resources in general education schools to work with students with special needs.
Timelines: Starting from 2004
Responsible institution: Regional Departments of Education

The report from the Ministry of Education and Science states that there is one resource room for students with special needs in Librazhd, which serves the students of two schools.

The resource room was created as collaborative effort between MEDPAK and the Department of Education and was funded by international donors.. The resource room serves the whole school, as it contains a library and several computers which are available to all students.

None of the reports of the departments of education provided any data on the implementation of this measure.

Status: No progress



Fatjona Nikaj, who you see in this picture together with her teacher, Naime Gruda, attends classes in the third grade at "Isa Jakupi" school in Dobrac, Shkoder. She is a wheelchair user with intellectual disabilities who has been integrated in the neighborhood school thanks to an

ADRF project, the willingness of the Shkoder Department of Education to provide the necessary support for her, the welcoming attitude of the school principal and the training the teacher received on inclusive practices. Also important were the collaboration between Fatjona's parents and school teachers, and the organization of activities for the class students and their parents to accept Fatjona as just another student.

Fatjona's father, Mirjan Nikaj, is very satisfied with the inclusive education his daughter is receiving in the neighborhood school and he points out that his daughter feels welcome and is not discriminated. Fatjona's teacher explains that, although she is committed to Fatjona's academic success, the student needs individualized support which the teacher cannot provide. The inclusion of students with special needs in regular classrooms has been done without the support of teaching aides.

Furthermore, the student needs to have an Individualized Education Plan, but the Ministry of Education and Science has not yet written and approved the respective regulations and has not provided any models. Fatjona could also benefit from a resource room in her school, where she could get specialized support to address her special needs.

Measure 3.5. Improve the legal provisions on the workload and the financial stimulus of teachers who teach students with special needs in integrated settings.

Timelines: 2005- 2006

Responsible institution: Ministry of Education and Science

The legal provisions on the workload and the financial rewards for teachers who teach students with special needs in inclusive settings are part of the Normative

Dispositions. The Ministry of Education and Science reports that the Normative Dispositions will be amended after the Law No. 7952, "On the K-12 Education" is amended.

Status: No progress

Measure 3.6. Prepare bulletins and reading materials for teachers and parents.

Timelines: starting from 2005

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Education and Science; (b) Regional Departments of Education; (c) NGOs

See 3.2 for the data from the Ministry of Education and Science. Additionally, the newspaper "The Teacher," which is a publication of the Ministry of Education and Science that goes to every school in Albania, has published several articles that encourage the inclusion of students with special needs in mainstream schools. A new book "School, Community, Acceptance" by: Agim Qoku, has been added to the useful materials for both parents and teachers. "Save the Children" and ADRF have also published materials for teachers that have been used in the training workshops. However, the publications have not been systematic and they did not cover age appropriate techniques of working with students with special needs related to different disability categories.

Status: Some progress

Measure 3.7. Treat as a priority the enrollment of children with disabilities in vocational schools.

Timelines: Starting from 2005

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Education and Science; (b) Regional Departments of Education

There are no available data on the total number of students with special needs who attended public vocational schools during 2007, or were registered for the first time. Shkoder Department of Education reports that 94 students with disabilities are enrolled in long-distance classes in vocational schools.

With the exception of students with visual impairment, no other students who graduate from the special education schools may attend any vocational education schools. The curriculum of special education schools only covers the lower cycle of the elementary

education, i.e., that of classes 1-4. As such, the students from special education schools are totally unprepared to attend any vocational school.

Status: No progress

Special Education Schools

Measure 4.1. Prepare and implement integrating curricula for students with disabilities in special education schools. The curricula will offer opportunities for the enhancement of social and practical skills through experiential activities.

Timelines: starting from 2005

Responsible institution: Ministry of Education and Science

There were 888 students with special needs who attended special education schools during the school year 2007-2008, a 24% increase from the previous school year. Two new schools were opened in Berat and Lac. Table 15 provides specific enrollment data per school and gender.

Table 15: **Special Education Schools**

School name	City	Disability Category	Females	Males	Total
The School for Students with Mild Mental Retardation	Vlora	Intellectual and physical	19	66	85
"Zëra Jete" ("Voices of Life")	Elbasan	Intellectual and physical	22	48	70
"Liri Gero"	Fier	Intellectual and physical	9	18	27
"Luigj Gurakuqi"	Tirana	Intellectual and physical	35	55	90
Institute For Children with Visual Impairments	Tirana	Vision impairments	17	45	62
Institute for Children with Hearing Impairments	Tirana	Hearing impairments	51	79	130
"3 Dhjetori" ("The 3rd of December")	Shkodra	Intellectual and physical	39	46	85
The School for Students with Mental Retardation	Korça	Intellectual and physical	3	23	26
The School for Students with Mild Mental Retardation	Durres	Intellectual and physical	28	49	77
"5 Maji" (The Fifth of May)	Berat	Intellectual	119	106	225
Day Center	Laç	Intellectual	4	7	11
Total			346	542	888

All the special education schools are instructed to collaborate with mainstream schools and offer inclusive opportunities to students with special needs. The reports from special education schools indicate that there have been no inclusive educational opportunities. There are several barriers, the most important of which is the curriculum for special schools. With the exception of the Institute for Students with Visual Impairments, all the other schools only cover the first four years of the national curriculum for the elementary schools by covering the one-year program in two. As such, they cannot take classes with their peer groups in mainstream schools. This issue has yet to be addressed.

The students of special education schools participate in joint sports and cultural activities at the local and national level.

Status: Very little progress

Measure 4.2. Provide transportation to special education schools for students with disabilities from rural areas.

Timelines: Starting from 2005

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Education and Science; (b) departments of education; (c) local government

Findings:

The special education schools report that very few children from rural areas attend special education school although there are variations from district to district. In Vlore, the problem of transportation to the special education school has been solved by parents though collaborative efforts with the Association of Volunteers of International Service (AVSI). In Durres, Elbasan and Tirane the municipality funds the expenses for gas and van repairs. The Ministry of Education and Science is in the process of preparing a DCM on the transportation of children from rural areas. An amount of \$200,000 has been earmarked for it.

Status: Some progress

Measure 4.3. Provide special programs in the special education schools for those categories of children with disabilities presently not covered (like autism).

Timelines: Starting from 2005

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Education and Science; (b) NGOs

Findings:

A project funded by AVSI in the Special Education School of Vlore provides learning opportunities to 50 children for 3 hours every Saturday under the guidance of 6 trained teachers.

No new programs have been created for students with other special needs, such as autism, multiple disabilities, etc. although there is an increased demand for them.

Status: No progress

Inclusive Schools and Kindergartens

Measure 5.1. Pilot 12 integrated schools and 12 integrated kindergartens in 6 regional centers which have universities.

Timelines: 2004-2006

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Education and Science;
(b) local government units

Findings:

The report of the Ministry of Education and Science states that there are a number of integrated schools and kindergartens in Tirane, Berat, Librazhd, Korce, Gjirokaster, and Vlore. With the exception of Shkoder Department of Education, the others failed to provide the list of schools where students with special needs are integrated, as well as the number of these integrated students even in the cases when the notes in the completed questionnaire asserted that "students with mild and moderate special needs are admitted in all schools and kindergartens." The departments of education do not collect data on the students with special needs in regular education, although they collect data on several other indicators such as the number of orphans, students with divorced parents, students with unemployed parents etc.

Table 16 was built with data from various sources. It shows that in 2007, 219 children with special needs were integrated in regular education classes in 21 inclusive schools in Tirane, Vlore, Berat and Librazhd. Information on the categories of disabilities comes from the ADRF Shkoder project only: cerebral palsy, epilepsy, intellectual disabilities, and developmental delays.

Table 16: **Students with Special Needs Integrated in Mainstream Schools**

City	Number of Schools	Number of Integrated Students
Tirane*	9	33
Librazhd*	2	50
Berat*	10	41
Shkoder**	9	75
Vlore***	4	20
Total	34	219

Notes: * Source: Ministry of Education and Science
**Source: Shkoder Municipality and ADRF
*** Source: Vlore Municipality

The data are not complete for children included in kindergartens, either. According to information received from various sources, 106 children with disabilities attend kindergarten in four cities of the country.

Table 17: **Children with Special Needs Integrated in Kindergartens**

City	Number of Kindergartens	Number of Integrated Students
Tirana	9	33
Librazhd*	2	8
Berat*	10	42
Shkoder**	2	3
Vlore***	4	20
Total	28	106

Notes: * Source: Ministry of Education and Science
**Source: Shkoder Municipality and ADRF
*** Source: Vlore Municipality

According to data from the MLSAEO¹⁶, 8,499 children with special needs between the ages of 6 and 18 who receive the disability benefit attend either general or special education schools. That leaves 4,534 children with special needs between ages of 6-18 (i.e., 34.7 % of all children with special needs that receive the disability benefit), who do not receive any form of education.

Status: Some progress

¹⁶ From the Website of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity. Retrieved on 09/21/08 from <http://www.mpcs.gov.al/statistikat>.



Loreta's mother, Prenda Deda, is very happy to see her daughter among friends in the third grade of the "Mati Logoreci" school in Shkoder.

Loreta has been diagnosed with inborn hemiparesis of the right extremities and mild intellectual disabilities, but thanks to an ADRF project, the staff of the Center for

Development of Equal Opportunities worked closely with the Department of Education and the school principal to find the right placement for her. Thanks to the persistence of her teacher, Matilda Lataj, Loreta has been able to keep up with her classmates, although she encounters many difficulties. The multidisciplinary assessment has determined that Matilda could certainly benefit from a teaching aide, physical therapy support, assistive technology and a well-prepared Individual Education Plan. Additionally, the teacher and the parents express the need for information that would help them better address Loreta's needs. The teacher received some training through workshops organized by ADRF, but she needs the assistance of a teacher trained to work with students with disabilities to provide guidance.

Measure 5.2. Open inclusive schools and kindergartens in all major cities of the country. In 2014, there will be 100 inclusive schools and 90 inclusive kindergartens in Albania.

Timelines: 2006-2014

Responsible institutions: (a) Ministry of Education and Science;
(b) local government units

Findings:

Work has started to lay the foundation for this process in many directions. The Ministry of Education and Science reports that the school atmosphere in general has become more inclusive. The Departments of Education are more welcoming, and in Tirana's case supported the project with specific instructions. Some parents of students with special needs became school board members in Berat and Librazhd. The student

governments in some schools of Tirana and Berat organized activities to promote inclusion at the school level. The concept of inclusive education has been covered in several training workshops with school principals, school teachers and preschool teachers for children ages 3-6. Sixty-five school principals and 13 inspectors from the Regional Departments of Education have been trained on how to prepare inclusive school development plans based on the materials prepared by Save the Children and the National Institute of Training in Education. More than six thousand teachers (n=6,600) from 211 schools in the 213 regions participated in training workshops on learner-centered teaching and inclusive education. Training workshops on elements of inclusive education were also organized for the teachers in the kindergarten system (ages 3-6) by The Early Childhood Development Program (ZHFH) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science, and the National Institute of Training in Education. Five hundred and forty-four teachers participated in the training workshops conducted in the 13 regions of the country.

Status: Good progress

Psychosocial and Educational Support Services

Measure 6.1. Start the educational-psychological services in inclusive schools consisting of a psychologist, a social worker and two or three part-time teachers in the major cities which are regional centers and have universities.

Timelines: 2008

Responsible institution: Ministry of Education and Science

Findings:

Currently, 140 psychologists and 32 social workers with Bachelor's degrees have been hired in the Albanian educational system. Each has a case load of 1,500-3,000 students. No data are available on the nature of their involvement with the students with disabilities that have been included in mainstream kindergartens and schools.

Status: Some progress

Measure 6.2. Create another seven new centers of educational-psychological services in the remaining regional centers.

Timelines: 2013

Responsible institution: Ministry of Education and Science

Findings:

There are currently no plans on the development of these services for students with disabilities.

Status: No progress

Artistic, Cultural and Sports Activities

Measure 7.1. Identify the number of people who participate in cultural and sport activities and their categories of disabilities. Conduct a needs assessment for the organization of activities in these areas.

Timeline: 2005 - 2006

Implementing institution: Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports

No needs assessment has been conducted. Additionally, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports does not have any statistics on the number of people with disabilities who have participated in various artistic, cultural and sports activities.

Status: No progress

Measure 7.2. Plan a special budget to cover the expenses for the implementation of the legislation on the state sponsoring of the cultural, artistic and sports activities for people with disabilities and their organizations.

Timeline: 2005 - 2006

Implementing institutions: (a) Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports;
(b) local government

Findings:

There is no earmarked budget for these activities in the budget of the local government. But through collaborative efforts with various NGOs, various activities are organized at the local and national level. Two national organizations, the Albanian Special Olympic Committee and the Albanian Paralympic Committee, and the Association of the Blind have received funding from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports for the organization of national championships and participation in international events at the amount of 1,200,000 leke (\$13,905).

Status: Some progress

Measure 7.3.

Create an annual calendar for the sport activities of people with disabilities. Support the participation of people with disabilities in national and international activities.

Timeline:

Annually

Implementing institutions: (a) Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports;
(b) local government; (c) NGOs

Findings:

There is no national annual calendar for the sport activities of people with disabilities. However, athletes with special needs participate in the events organized by the Albanian Special Olympic Committee and the Albanian Paralympic Committee. Vlore Municipality reports that Special Olympic events are organized in that city every May and Durres municipality reports that events for people with physical disabilities are organized annually. The Association of Albanian Invalids has organized chess games and swimming competitions with invalids from Macedonia. The Association of the Blind has organized national soccer championships. Nine Albanian athletes, ages 15-40 participated in the Summer Special Olympics in Shanghai in 2007, in bowling, athletics and swimming. The athletes of Paralympics prepared to participate in the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing, China. Albanian artists participated in the "Balkana 2007," a Regional Artist Colony organized by Landmine Survivors Network in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Status: Some progress

Measure 7.4.

Increase the number of recreational activities for various groups of people with disabilities. Whenever possible combine recreation with rehabilitation.

Timeline:

Starting in 2005

Implementing institutions: (a) Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports;
(b) local government; (c) NGOs

Findings:

The Municipality of Tirana has organized activities to celebrate the International Day of People with Disabilities as well as other mainstream events where the participation of the students with special needs has been encouraged. The Municipality of Elbasan has worked together with World Vision and the parents' organization to organize activities

for people with special needs. Various activities and events have been organized by the Association of the Blind and the Association of Labor Invalids. VSA Arts (Very Special Arts) of Albania organized recreational activities and events that combined art with rehabilitation in the psychiatric department of the University Hospital Center of Tirana as well as various day care centers. During these activities, children, youth, and adults had the opportunity to express themselves through music, dance, and poetry.

Status: Some progress

Measure 7.5. Secure funding for joint public sport activities for people with and without disabilities.

Timeline: Starting in 2005

Implementing institutions: (a) Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports;
(b) local government

Findings:

No funding was earmarked for joint sport activities for inclusive sports activities. Although some joint activities have been organized mainly among school students like basketball and soccer games, as Tirana municipality reports, inclusive activities in sports have been sparse due to lack of interest and lack of funds.

Status: No progress

Measure 7.6. Systematically advertise the planned activities

Timeline: Starting in 2005

Implementing institutions: NGOs of people with disabilities

Findings:

The NGOs of people with disabilities have advertised their activities mostly among their membership. The events and activities are not advertised in the mainstream media due to lack of funds. The municipalities and the ministries have provided no support.

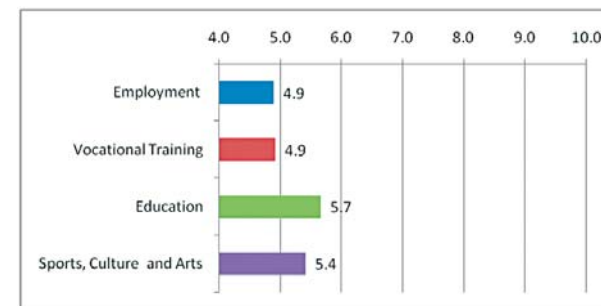
Status: Little progress

**RESULTS OF THE SURVEY CONDUCTED
WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS**

The participants in the survey, 464 people with disabilities and 458 family members were asked to grade the current situation related to the area of employment, vocational training, education and participation in cultural, artistic and sports activities using the Albanian grade system from 4-10. Although the mode grade for all the questions was 4 (i.e., fail), the cluster of questions received a mean grade of 5.36 (i.e. a mere pass).

The participants were especially concerned with the insufficient work done in the area of employment and vocational training, both of which received a failing grade. The better results for education may be explained by the fact that many of the participants were family members of special education students and not of the children who have been denied the right to education. Figure 24 illustrates the findings:

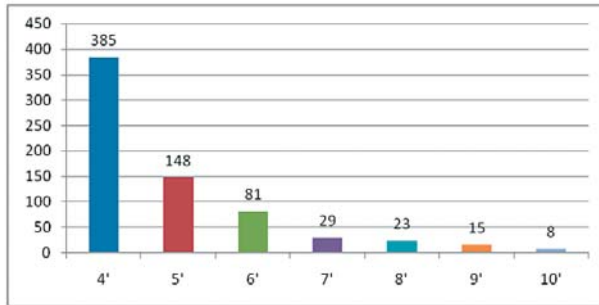
Fig. 24. **Mean grades per field**



Asked to give a grade to the degree of satisfaction with the opportunities for work in compliance with the abilities, the majority of the respondents (56%) chose 4, a failing grade as Figure 25 shows.

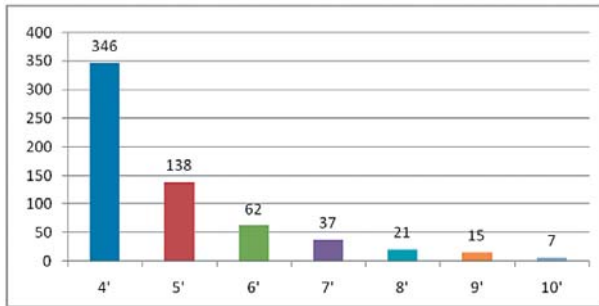
That was related to the degree of satisfaction of opportunities for vocational training through vocational education schools or various shorter terms training courses. Half of the respondents (50%) chose a failing grade.

Fig. 25. Opportunities for employment



N=689
M= 4.89
SD= 1.33

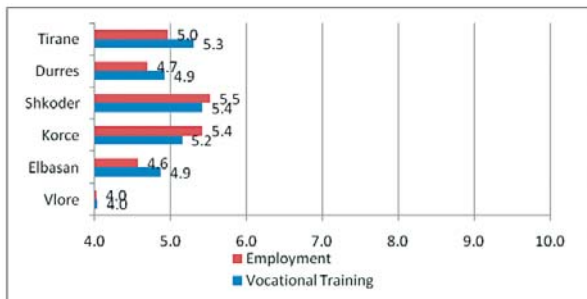
Fig. 26. Vocational education and training



M=4.91
N=626
SD=1.36

The responses of the survey indicate that people with disabilities and family members of Vlore, Elbasan and Durres perceive the situation to be worse than in Tirane, Shkoder and Korce. Fig. illustrates their responses.

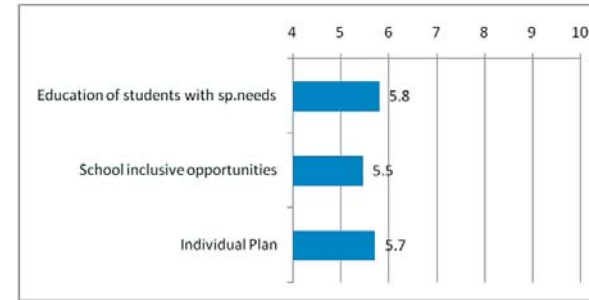
Fig. 27. Mean grades for employment and vocational training divided by region



While the three questions related to education received a mean grade of 5.7, there were small differences in the mean grades for questions as Fig. 28 shows. Respondents

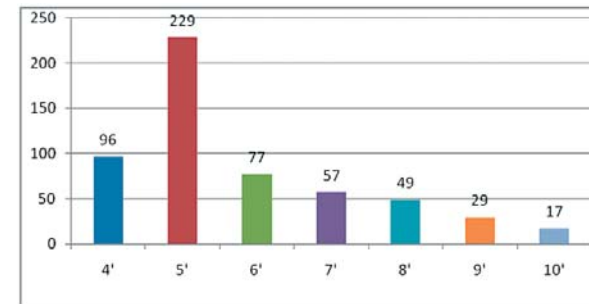
with disabilities and their family members are less satisfied with inclusive opportunities for special needs students.

Fig. 28. The mean grades for questions related to education



Asked to grade their satisfaction with the education of the students with disabilities (the curriculum, the quality of teaching, the teachers' expertise, teaching aids, etc.) the majority of the respondents (41%) elected the grade that indicates a mere pass: 5. Fig. 29 illustrates the findings.

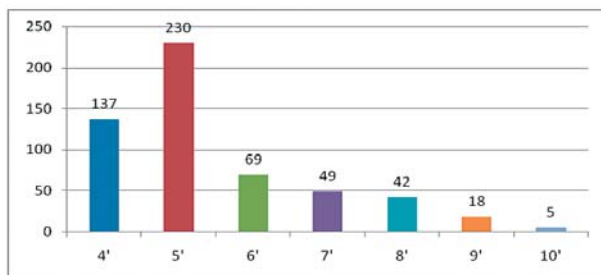
Fig. 29. Education



N=554
M=5.79
SD=1.58

More than a quarter of the respondents (28%) feel that schools are failing students with disabilities in providing inclusive opportunities with their peers.

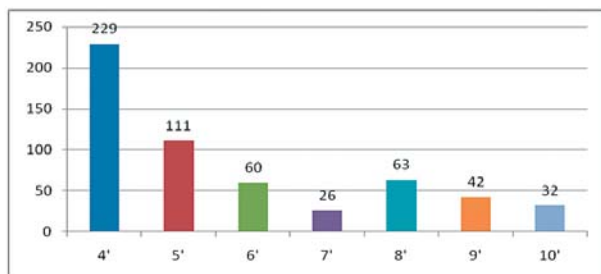
Fig. 30. Inclusive opportunities in schools



N=550
M=5.46
SD=1.40

The Individual Education Plan is the corner stone of the education of students with special needs in classroom or day/residential care center, but 40% of the respondents gave a failing grade to the process, evaluation of results, consideration of parents' opinion, etc. See Fig. 31 for more specific information.

Fig. 31 Individual Education Plan



M=5.71
N=563
SD=1.95

The perception of the quality of work in education is different for different categories of disabilities as Fig.28 shows. The perception is also impacted by the region where the people live, with the respondents from Elbasan giving higher grades than the people of Vlore. See Fig 33.

Fig. 32. Education per disability category

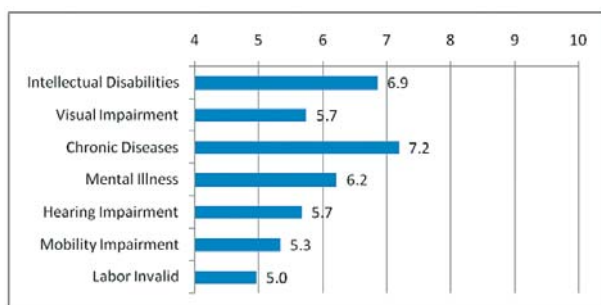
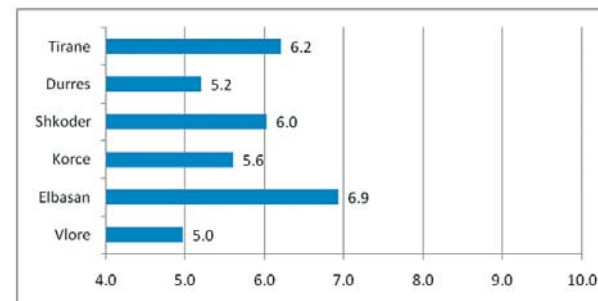
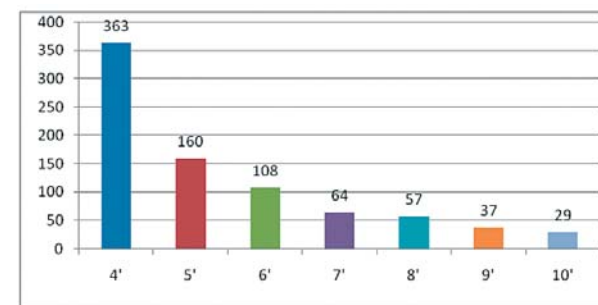


Fig. 33. Education per region



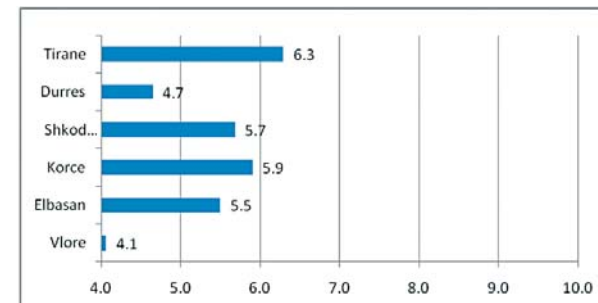
Participation in sports, and artistic and cultural activities according to desire received a mean grade of 5.4, but it is noteworthy that about half of the respondents (48%) feel that people with disabilities are excluded, as Fig. 34 shows. Also, the respondents from Vlore and Durres had a much more negative perception than the people of Tirane, where most of the activities happen.

Fig. 34 Participation in sports, artistic and cultural activities



N=818
M=5.41
SD=1.72

Fig. 35. Participation in sports, artistic and cultural activities divided by region



DISCUSSION

One of the main objectives of this area is to "improve policies on the employment of people with disabilities and implement them effectively." An analysis of the work done for the implementation of the measures related to this objective suggests that very little has been done both in improving policies and implementing the existing ones. No study was carried out on the opportunities for employment of people with disabilities, no protected jobs were created, the benefits scheme was not changed, the special centers for employment were created by NGOs and most of the labor offices in the country have been unsuccessful in obligating employers to hire people with disabilities as required by law (see table 18). People with disabilities and their family members reiterated these findings by giving employment a failing mean grade of 4.9. Although the barrier most frequently identified in the questionnaires completed by experts at the central, regional and local level was funding, lack of expertise in specific field of employment of people with disabilities in the labor offices of all levels seems to be the real issue.

Table 18: **Employment**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
1.1. Studies will be conducted on the status of employment of people with disabilities as well as job opportunities for them in the labor market.	2004	MLSAEO/State Employment Services	Very little progress.
1.2. Encourage and support the creation of projected jobs for people with disabilities and ensure transportation for inclusive employment.	2004	MLSAEO /State Insurance Institute	No progress.
1.3. Reform the benefit and pension schemes for people with disabilities to avoid conflicts with current labor market policies.	2005	MLSAEO/ State Insurance Institute	No progress.

1.4. Open special centers for the employment of people with disabilities.	2005	MLSAEO /State Employment Service NGOs	Very little progress.
1.5. Find effective ways to obligate the employers to implement the existing legislation for the employment of people with disabilities.	2004-2005	MLSAEO /State Employment Services	No progress.

Very little has been done to towards the improvement of the policies and programs for vocational training of people with disabilities, as well. The system has not been revised as planned, and no services for job development, job counseling and on-the job training for people with disabilities have been developed. Although some efforts are done, the people with disabilities are not treated as a special clientele with specific needs by the labor offices, who do not have trained personnel to address the special needs of people with disabilities. The survey participants gave the status the opportunities for vocational training a failing grade of 4.9. Table 19 summarizes the status of the implementation of the second objective.

Table 19: **Vocational Education and Training**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
2.1. Revise the system of professional rehabilitation and training for people with disabilities in compliance with the demands of the job market.	2005	MLSAEO/ State Employment Services	Very little progress.
2.2. In collaboration with employers, develop opportunities for employment, vocational counseling and support services for people with disabilities.	2005 and ongoing	MLSAEO / State Employment Services	No progress.

Improvement of the inclusive education schemes with the goal of the full integration of children with disabilities in the Albanian public schools has been marked by noticeable delays in implementing the measures. As Table 20 displays, out of seven measures to be completed by 2006, only one has been accomplished: the one that is specifically related to the education of students with special needs in inclusive schools. The main reason for this delay is the lack of a national platform and action plan for inclusive education as well as the absence of administrative structures that will implement it. There is only one person at the Ministry of Education and Science that covers the formulation and implementation of the policies related to students with special needs in inclusive setting and special education schools.

Table 20: **Inclusive Education**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
3.1. Approve a new school curriculum that encourages inclusion.	2004-2006	Ministry of Education and Science	Task completed, but improvements are needed to encourage the inclusion of students with special needs.
3.2. Prepare a packet with practical guidelines, teaching materials and standards for the integration of students with special needs for the public schools.	2004-2006	Ministry of Education and Science	Some progress.
3.3. Prepare and approve a normative act that regulates the individual education plan (IEP), and specifies the admission rules for students with special needs as well as their assessment procedures.	2004-2006	Ministry of Education and Science	No progress.

3.4. Create resources in general education schools to work with students with special needs.	2004	Regional Departments of Education	No progress.
3.5. Improve the legal provision on the workload and the financial stimulus of teachers who teach students with special needs in integrated settings.	2005-2006	Ministry of Education and Science	No progress.
3.6. Prepare bulletins and reading materials for teachers and parents.	2005	Ministry of Education and Science Regional Departments of Education NGOs	Some progress.
3.7. Treat as a priority the enrollment of children with disabilities in vocational schools.	2005	Ministry of Education and Science Regional Departments of Education	No progress.

During 2007, the number of students in special education schools increased by about 24%, but this is the only change. The special education students (with the exception of the students with visual impairment) still are not in a position to have inclusive education opportunities with their age peers due to the curricular constraints.

While students with special needs participate in joint activities with other school students in their area, the inclusive events are not frequent. Transportation of children from rural areas continues to be a problem and no new programs have been opened for children with other categories of disabilities. It is clear that the special education schools are not a priority of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Table 21: **Measures Related to Special Education Schools**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
4.1. Prepare and implement integrating curricula for students with disabilities in special education schools. The curricula will offer opportunities for the enhancement of social and practical skills through experiential activities.	2005	Ministry of Education and Science	Very little progress.
4.2. Provide transportation to special education schools for students with disabilities from rural areas.	2005	Ministry of Education and Science Departments of Education Local government units	Some progress.
4.3. Provide special programs in the special education schools for those categories of children with disabilities presently not covered (like autism).	2005	Ministry of Education and Science NGOs	No progress.

Some progress has been noted with the gradual establishment and extension of integrated schools and kindergartens. The concept of inclusive schools has been the focus of training workshops with school principals and teachers as well as kindergarten teachers. In addition, a number of students with special needs have been integrated in regular education schools, and their progress is noticeable, as the cases for students integrated in Shkoder schools through the ADRF project demonstrate. However, the fact remains that 4,534 children with special needs between ages of 6-18 (i.e., 34.7 % of all children with special needs that receive the disability benefit), do not receive any form of education in direct violation to the Constitution of Albania.

Table 22: **Inclusive Schools and Kindergartens**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
5.1. Pilot 12 integrated schools and 12 integrated kindergartens in 6 regional centers which have universities.	2004-2006	Ministry of Education and Science Local governments	Some progress.
5.2. Open inclusive schools and kindergartens in all major cities of the country. In 2014, there will be 100 inclusive schools and 90 inclusive kindergartens in Albania.	2006-2014	Ministry of Education and Science Local government units	Good progress.

Some work has been done for the establishment of psycho-pedagogic and psycho-social services in schools by the hiring of psychologists and social workers in the school system. However, there are no plans for the creation of positions for teaching aides and special education teachers in the integrated schools.

Table 23: **Psychosocial and Educational Support Services**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
6.1. Start the educational-psychological services in inclusive schools consisting of a psychologist, a social worker and two or three part-time teachers in the major cities which are regional centers and have universities.	2008	Ministry of Education and Science	Some progress.
6.2. Create another seven new centers of educational-psychological services in the remaining regional centers.	2013	Ministry of Education and Science	No progress.

About half of the participants in the survey were not satisfied with the opportunities for participation in the artistic, cultural and sports activities and the questionnaires completed by the municipalities indicated that such activities are not regular and are mostly focused on school students. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports has supported the participation of athletes in international Special Olympic and Paralympic events but has not made other efforts for the implementation of the measures of the Action Plan.

Table 24: **Artistic, Cultural and Sports Activities**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
7.1. Identify the number and types of people with disabilities who benefit from special advantages to participate in cultural and sport activities. Conduct a needs assessment for the organization of activities in these areas.	2005-2006	Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports	No progress.
7.2. Plan a special budget to cover the expenses for the implementation of the legislation on the state sponsoring of the cultural, artistic, and sports activities for people with disabilities and their organizations.	2005-2006	Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports Local government	No progress.
7.3. Create an annual calendar for sport activities of people with disabilities. Support the participation of people with disabilities in national and international activities.	Annually	Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports Local government NGOs	No progress.
7.4. Increase the number of recreational activities for various groups of people with disabilities. Whenever possible combine recreation with rehabilitation.	2005	Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports	Some progress.

7.5. Secure funding for joint public sport activities for people with and without disabilities.	2005	Local government Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports	No progress.
7.6. Systematically advertise the planned activities.	2005	Local government NGOs of people with disabilities	Little progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The employment and vocational training of people with disabilities needs considerable attention by the respective government agencies. The following are some recommendations that might help change the current situation:

1. The MLSAEO needs to take the revision of the disability benefit schemes related to earned income from employment very seriously to avoid parasitic attitudes and encourage the interest for employment of people with disabilities.
2. Special studies need to be conducted by the National Employment Service on the labor market for people with disabilities and barriers to job-seeking and job development in order to understand the stumbling blocks and design adequate policies that promote employment.
3. It is imperative to enhance the professional expertise related to the employment and vocational training of people with disabilities at the central, regional and local level. The MLSAEO and the National Employment Service need to include this issue in the short-term plan for the development of professional capacities for their staff.
4. The MLSAEO needs to take the necessary measures to prepare the amendments to the existing legislation on the quotas for the employment of people with disabilities and accompany them with the respective bylaws.
5. Policies that encourage the vocational training of unemployed people with disabilities need to be formulated, approved and implemented.

The following recommendations concern the domain of the education for students with special needs in regular and special education schools:

1. The Ministry of Education and Science needs to start the process for the revision of the Normative Dispositions without delay and consider it a priority for the ministry.
2. In order to carry out the major task of the expansion of inclusive educational nationally, the Ministry of Education and Science must set up the necessary administrative structures at the central level with adequately trained personnel.
3. The Ministry of Education and Science needs to consider the production and distribution of disability-appropriate teaching aids for inclusive schools as a priority, and make sure that they become available to both teachers and parents.
4. The Ministry of Education and Science needs to identify the barriers encountered by the students with special needs in attending vocational education schools and formulate and implement policies that address these barriers.
5. The Ministry of Education and Science needs to evaluate the work done by school psychologists with students with disabilities and provide guidance on the expectations.

The main recommendations for the encouragement of the participation of people with disabilities in arts and sports and other recreational activities are the following:

1. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports needs to set up an administrative structure that will monitor the implementation of the respective measures of the NSDP, collect data, prepare annual reports and make sure that the necessary budget for the activities is planned systematically.
2. The responsible administrative structures at the local government need to collaborate more closely with the disability NGOs for the organization of inclusive and separate artistic, cultural and sports activities.

AREA IV. CAPACITY BUILDING

NSPD has treated capacity building in the field of disabilities as a prerequisite for its implementation. On page 25 of the English version, capacity building in the field of disabilities has been operationally defined to include the following aspects: (a) the education of government representatives involved in the legislative and executive process at the central and local government; (b) the establishment of a monitoring structure for the implementation of NSPD; (c) the appropriate training of all people providing services to people with disabilities in the medical, rehabilitation, social services, education, employment, vocational training and recreational areas; and (d) the active participation of people with disabilities and their family members in the decision-making process that impacts their lives. The objective for this area was expressed as follows:

Enhance the capacities of the structures that deal with disability, by establishing new administrative structures, improving the level of the existing ones and enhancing the relevant human resources capacity.

RESULTS

The reporting of results will be done in two sections. The first section provides information on the status of progress made in implementing the National Action Plan of the NSPD in 2007, by reporting the findings for each measure planned. As not all aspects covered in the NSPD were included in the Action Plan, additional information will be provided for those areas not included. The second section of the results will present the findings of the survey conducted with people with disabilities and family members on their perception of the situation for relevant topics.

IMPLEMENTATION OF 2007 TASKS, PREPARATION FOR FUTURE TASKS

Action Plan Measures

Measure 1.1. Establish a monitoring structure for the National Strategy on People with Disabilities.
Timeline: 2005
Implementing institution: MLSAEO

The monitoring structure for the national strategy has been set up at the central government level, but has yet to be established at the local government level. Also, as the following description shows, the central government structures have not met regularly to determine policies in the field as required by NSPD. The National Disability Council has been set up as the highest authority that will ensure the implementation of the NSPD. The Council which is chaired by the vice-prime minister consists of the Minister of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities; Minister of Education and Science; Minister of Health; Minister of Justice; Minister of Public Works, Transport and Telecommunication; and Minister of the Interior. Other members of the Council are representatives from the Association of Albanian Labor Invalids, the Association of the Blind, the Association of People with Paraplegia, the Association of People with Hearing Impairments, and the Association "Assisting People with Intellectual Disabilities. In 2007, the Council met once (instead of the three times required in the strategy). The Technical Secretariat has been set up with three full-time employees at the MLSAEO. One of the employees is a person with a disability. The main task for the Secretariat has been to set up a network of contacts with the local government and prepare the Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for 2006 and 2007. The Technical Secretariat has published the two reports, but has not yet been successful in establishing the national network. The Administrative Council of the SSS has been set up with representatives from disability groups. Each of the Ministries represented at the National Disability Council has a contact person on disability issues. All of the 12 Regional offices of the SSS and the regional councils of the local government have a contact person on disability issues. However, when contacted for information on the implementation of the Action Plan, most of them reported that they had no information related to disability issues in their regions. Only some of the municipalities have persons who have been assigned to be as points of information contacts. With the exception of the experts of Tirana and Shkoder, the others who filled out the questionnaires of the study, indicated that they had little or no knowledge of the developments in the area of services for people with disabilities in their municipality.

Status: Some progress

Measure 1.2. Establishment and consolidation of new regional structures for the multi-disciplinary assessment (physical, medical and social) of the people with disabilities.
Timeline: 2005
Implementing institutions: (a) Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunity; (b) State Social Service

The MCDAW continues to focus on the medical needs that qualify the eligibility for the government benefits. The changes provided in the Joint Order of the Ministry of Health and MLSAEO no. 382 (02/26/2007) did not address the need of the multidisciplinary assessment.

Status: Very little progress

Measure 1.3. Establish a center of medical expertise at the General Directorate of State Insurance Institute and modernize regional directorates. (0.5 million Euros)
Timeline: Starting from 2005
Implementing institutions: (a) Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities; (b) Social Insurance Institute

The Center of Medical Expertise at the General Directorate of the State Insurance Institute has not yet been set up.

Status: No progress

Measure 1.4. (a) Enhance the human resources capacity at the State Employment Service at the central and local levels through training on psycho-social support of the staff who teach in vocational training centers.
(b) Open vocational training courses for the preparation of professionals in the areas of physical, social, psychological and professional rehabilitation of people with disabilities.
Timeline: 2005-2006
Implementing institutions: (a) Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities; (b) National Employment Service.

No information has been provided by the NES or the regional labor offices on whether this measure has been implemented.

No vocational training courses were open for the preparation of professionals in the areas of physical, social, psychological and professional rehabilitation of people with disabilities.

Status: No progress

Other Significant Developments

The first cohort of physical therapists graduated from the University "Our Lady of Good Council" which is supported by Italian donors. Additionally, 22 students graduated from the "Ismail Qemali" University of Vlora with a major in specialized pedagogy. The first Master's degree course in special needs also started there in 2007, with 15 students who are expected to graduate in 2009. The Department of Specialized Pedagogy in Vlora is supported by the Albanian government, Lucerne College of Education, as well as the University of Sherbrook and the University of Quebec in Montreal.



Pellumb Legisis, who you see in this picture in a session of music therapy, is from the first cohort of students who majored in Specialized Pedagogy in "Ismail Qemali" University of Vlora.

He works as a development therapist with different age groups of people with intellectual

disabilities. He feels that his education prepared him very well, although he believes in continuing education as part of his professional growth.

Aferdita Seiti, the director of "Help Life", the non-profit organization where Pellumb is employed, is very satisfied with his work. Pellumbi has been able to build a very good rapport with the clients.

He motivates them to work through a variety of methodologies, most of which involve different forms of creativity such as the "Animal Theater," musical games etc.

The Department of Training and Projects at the SSS reports that no funds were earmarked in the state budget for the training of experts who are currently covering disability services in the Regional SSS or at the municipality level. The training came from nonprofit organization. With a grant from GZT, ADRF prepared the training modules and conducted 18 training sessions in Shkoder, Korce, Vlora, Berat, Durres and Tirana.

The goal of the training sessions was to encourage the implementation of the Standards of Services for People with Disabilities, by increasing the knowledge of the stakeholders at the local level and building a network of cooperation among them. One hundred and three (103) government officials, 83 service providers, and 95 people with disabilities and family members attended the training workshops. The topics covered included the Law on Social Services and Economic Assistance, the Standards of Social Services, and the Standards of Services for People with Disabilities.

Additionally, SSS in collaboration with UNICEF implemented the project, "Support for the Implementation of the Standards of Social Services for Children in Residential Care." The management teams and staff from 15 residential care institutions for children and development centers for children with disabilities (n=150) attended the training workshops that were conducted by Albanian and International experts.

Training for the staff of development centers was also provided by the Swiss organization "Association pour le Soutien de l'Enfance en Détresse" (ASED) and the "Ismail Qemali" University of Vlora.

In order to promote the NSPD and educate the people involved in the legislative and decision making process at the local level, ADRF also organized six educational workshops in Shkoder, Durres, Tirane, Elbasan, Korce and Vlora. The participants were representatives from NGOs that advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, women, children, and roma as well as human rights in general; government officials in the areas of social and health services, employment, education, and construction; and representatives from the business community and the media (n=286). The workshops were funded by USAID.

A very important development of 2007 is the Disability and Development Coalition, Albania, (DDCA). DDCA was created with 25 members who represent organizations that advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, other nonprofit organizations, donors, representatives from the business community such as Vodafone and Credins Bank, as well as representatives from public and private

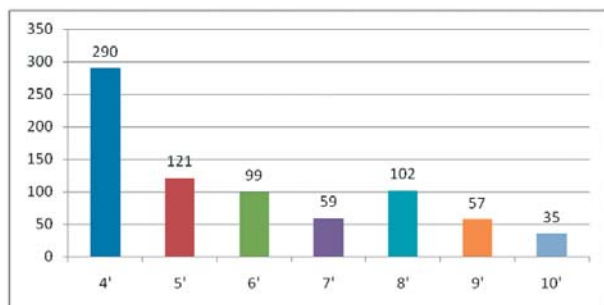
entities. The group signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together to promote and support disability and development work. Technical assistance for this project was provided by Mobility International USA, through a grant from USAID.

In 2007, Albania became member of the project "Sustainable Development Through the Global Compact," which promotes the Corporate Social Responsibility. The project is funded by the Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it is implemented by the International Labor Organization (ILO). Vodafone and the American Bank of Albania have supported initiatives in the field of disabilities.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY CONDUCTED WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS

The participants in the survey were asked two questions related to capacity building. When asked about the degree of the satisfaction with the professional training of the people that work with people with disabilities or cover their issues in various capacities, such as teachers, social workers, day and residential care staff, staff at the municipalities, labor offices and the ministries, the respondents gave it a passing grade: 5.83. But it must be noted that 38% of the participants gave it a failing grade as Fig. 36 illustrates.

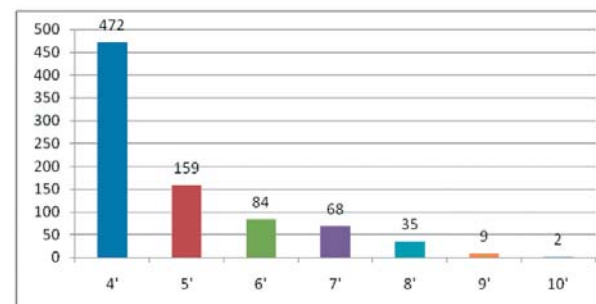
Fig. 36 Staff expertise



N=763
M=5.83
SD=1.91

The people with disabilities and their family members feel that they are not considered as partners in the decision making process at day/residential care centers, and at the municipality/commune, region or ministry level. The participants gave this aspect a failing grade of 4.88.

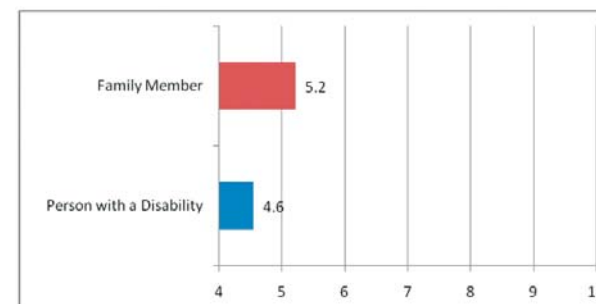
Fig. 37. Opinion respected in decision making



N=829
M=4.88
SD=1.27

After analyzing the data, it becomes apparent that people with disabilities feel more excluded than their family members. While family members gave it a mean grade of 5.2, people with disabilities gave it a failing mean grade of 4.6. The difference was statistically significant ($p=0001$)

Fig. 38. Participation in decision making by category of respondent



Discussion

The measures planned for the implementation of the NSPD in the area of capacity building do not encompass all aspects of the operational definition presented in the text of the strategy. As such, the picture we are presenting in this study is far from complete. But in line with the methodology, only the measures of the Action Plan were included in our research. The results show that only one of the measures planned denotes some progress. This puts the realization of the measures in this area at only 25%.

The other area of concern is the attitude of the people who work in the field of disabilities towards people with disabilities. The latter feel that their opinion is not valued and they are not considered as partners.

Table 25: **Capacity Building**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
1.1. Establish a monitoring structure for the National Strategy on People with Disabilities	2005	MLSAEO	Some progress
1.2. Establishment and consolidation of new regional structures for the multi-disciplinary assessment (physical, medical and social) of the people with disabilities	2005	MLSAEO State Social Service	No progress.
1.3. Establish a center of medical expertise at the General Directorate of State Insurance Institute and modernize regional directorates. (0.5 million Euros)	Starting from 2005	MLSAEO Social Insurance Institute	No progress.
1.4. Enhance the human resources capacity at the State Employment Service at the central and local levels through training on psycho-social support of the staff who teach in vocational training centers. Open vocational training courses for the preparation of professionals in the areas of physical, social, psychological and professional rehabilitation of people with disabilities.	2005-2006	MLSAEO National Employment Service	No progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Capacity building is the cornerstone of the success of the enhancement of the quality of life for people with disabilities and their inclusion in the Albanian society. The following are some recommendations that may help in achieving the objectives set by the NSDP:

1. Expand the National Council on Disability by increasing the representation and participation of the stakeholders from academia, and service and advocacy organizations.
2. Take the necessary measures to complete the network of collaborators with the Technical Secretariat at all government levels (central, regional, local). Plan the financial resources for the training of the network.
3. The disability assessment process needs to be radically changed to make sure that the human rights of people with disabilities are respected and fulfilled. Measures need to be taken to train the staff involved in the assessment process.
4. Encourage and support the opening of new majors in higher education for new professions in the field of disabilities such as vocational rehabilitation counselors, speech, music, and art therapists.
5. Encourage and support the opening of short-term vocational training courses that prepare staff that will work with people with different disabilities in day and residential care settings.
6. Prepare a training curriculum and plan the financial resources that support the systematic training of the staff involved in the field of disabilities at the central, regional and local level.
7. Promote the concept of inclusion in all policies, programs and projects designed for people with disabilities.
8. Encourage the participation of people with disabilities and their family members in the decision making process by creating the necessary mechanisms at the regional and local level.

AREA V. LEGISLATION AND RESEARCH

The six objectives in the area of legislation and research have two main goals: improve the lives of people with disabilities by ensuring equality and easy access to services; and conduct and disseminate studies that will ultimately assist in improving the existing social policies for people with disabilities and designing new legislation. The objectives are formulated as follows:

1. Ensure full equality for people with disabilities through improvements in the legislation on social services, education, housing and telecommunication.
2. Improve access and simplify the procedures related to people with disabilities.
3. Ensure relevant and updated information and data on number, typology and social situation of people with disabilities.
4. Support the research programs on the economic, social, and rehabilitation issues related to people with disabilities.
5. Prepare and distribute information on people with disabilities at the national, regional and local level.
6. Support the education programs against the discrimination of people with disabilities.

RESULTS

The results of the evaluation study on the degree of implementation of the National Action Plan in the field of legislation and research are presented in two sections in the form of findings. The first section consists of the report on the work done for each measure according to the area of intervention and respective objective. It must be noted that some of the achievements and issues in the area of legislation and research are also covered in the reports for other areas of the Action Plan as they are intertwined

with those measures. Also, a complete list of Albanian legislation which affects the lives of people with disabilities is found in the introduction, and this section only includes the legislation related to the measure. The second part of this section provides data from the six-region surveys with people with disabilities and family members illustrated with tables and charts.

IMPLEMENTATION OF 2007 TASKS, PREPARATION FOR FUTURE TASKS

Measure 1.1. Prepare the basis for the establishment of a separate state institution specialized in dealing with disability rights and issues.

Timeline: Missing in the Action Plan¹⁷

Implementing institutions: Missing in the Action Plan

Findings:

The interviews with experts from the MLSAEO and representatives from disability NGOs indicate that there is no progress in the implementation of this measure.

Status: No progress

Measure 1.2. Conduct a study on the Albanian legislation that covers issues related to people with disabilities. Make comparisons with the related international standards and conventions.

Timeline: 2005-2006

Implementing institutions: (a) MLSAEO; (b) Ministry of Health; (c) Ministry of Education and Science; (c) Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports; (d) Ministry of Finances; (f) Ministry of Justice.

Findings:

None of the ministries assigned as implementing institutions have been involved in the study. The expert of the Ministry of Education and Science, who completed

¹⁷ The Action Plan posted in the website of the MLSAEO was used as a reference for this study. It was retrieved in January 2008, from <http://www.mpcs.gov.al/strategji-standarte> and it was still on the same website on 10/06/08.

the questionnaire, noted that this was not part of their responsibilities, whereas the expert of the Ministry of Health stated that this was a major effort that required coordination.

The study "The Compliance of Albanian Legislation with the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the relevant European Union Legislation" was conducted in September 2007 by ADRF and funded by UNICEF. The results have been disseminated to the competent Ministries and disability advocacy organizations to be used as tool in lobbying for the ratification of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Albanian government.

The shadow report on the implementation of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child in Albania prepared by Children's Human Rights Center of Albania (CRCA) had a section on the implementation of Article 23, which provides the rights of children with disabilities and the obligations of the states to meet them. The report identified all the cases in which the rights of the Albanian children with disabilities were violated.

Status: No progress by the assigned institutions. Work done by the NGOs

Measure 1.3. Prepare an integral law on disability.

Timeline: 2006

Implementing institutions: (a) MLSAEO; (b) Ministry of Health; (c) Ministry of Education and Science; (c) Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports; (d) Ministry of Finances; (f) Ministry of Justice

Findings:

The bill has not yet been written and no task force has been set up by the MLSAEO to work on it. It has been postponed by the MLSAEO.

Status: No progress

Measure 1.4. Include an article that guarantees the inclusion of accessibility standards in all new constructions in the Law "On Urban Planning."

Timeline: 2005

Implementing institution: MPWTT

Findings:

The Bill on Urban Planning written during 2007 includes special provisions on accessibility thanks to the involvement of the disability advocacy experts.

Status: Good progress

Measure 1.5. Improve the existing legislation on transportation with the goal of making it accessible for people with disabilities
Timeline: 2005 and ongoing
Implementing institution: MPWTT

Findings:

No new legislation was formulated or passed in 2007 on improving the accessibility of transportation means. Additionally, no such legislation was formulated and/or passed in 2005 and 2006.

Status: No progress

Measure 1.6. Establish technical standard on the means of public transportation to ensure accessibility.
Timeline: 2006
Implementing institution: MPWTT

Findings:

The technical standards on the accessibility of the means of public transportation have not yet been prepared.

Status: No progress

Measure 1.7. Amend the Road Code and the legislation that provides the technical conditions of the use of automotive means. Modify the regulations and technical specifications for the construction of public roads which are free of barriers.
Timeline: 2006
Implementing institution: MPWTT

Findings:

No amendments have been made to the Road Code and the standards for the construction of roads to ensure accessibility.

Status: No progress

Measure 1.8. Prepare a manual with instructions on how to make streets accessible for people with disabilities.
Timeline: 2005-2007
Implementing institution: MPWTT

Findings:

No such manual has been prepared.

Status: No progress

Measure 2.1. Prepare the respective legislation on the technical standards of adaptive equipment and teaching aids for children and students.
Timeline: 2006
Implementing institutions: (a) Ministry of Education and Science;
 (b) MLSAEO/Social Insurance Institute/SSS;
 (c) Ministry of Health

Findings:

The work to prepare a bill on the technical standards of adaptive equipment and teaching aids for children and students with disabilities has not yet started. While the MLSAEO believes that it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Health, the latter do not see it as their responsibility.

Status: No progress

Measure 2.2. Improve legislation which excludes the vehicles used by people with disabilities from customs fees.
Timeline: 2004-2005
Implementing institutions: (a) MLSAEO/ SSS; (b) MES; (c) NGOs

Findings:

Only people with para and tetra-plegia, and severe visual impairments, and labor invalids are eligible for this benefit. No task force has yet been set up to work on including other disability categories in the eligibility criteria.

Status: No progress



Abdulla Omuri lost his leg in a mine accident in 1988, and he became a labor invalid. Later, he majored in agrarian economics and jurisprudence. Since 1994, he has been president of the Association of Albanian Labor Invalids, which has 32,800 members and affiliates in 36 districts. Mr. Omuri has participated in the formulation of the National Strategy on Persons with Disabilities (NSPD), the amendments to the law on social services and economic assistance, amendments to the law of pre-university education, amendments to

the law on construction, the bill on the status of persons with intellectual disabilities, etc. Mr. Omuri believes that thanks to joint efforts of the disability non-governmental organizations, there have been some achievements in the area of disability related legislation such as the amendments in the law on social services and economic assistance in 2005, which increased the number of beneficiaries, the approval of the Urbanistic Construction Standards, which included accessibility standards, the amendment of the election code that gave the right to blind people to vote by themselves as well as five DCMs on the benefits of labor invalids. However, Mr. Omuri is concerned that the priority of the NSPD to formulate an integral bill for all disability categories is still on paper, the status on persons with intellectual disabilities has not yet been approved, the law on the stimulus of employment has not been changed to reflect the needs of the people with disabilities in the labor markets and the social insurance legislation on the benefits of the labor invalids has not been amended to reflect the amount of the contribution. The failure to implement the measures of the Action Plan of the NSPD has a direct impact on the quality of life of people with disabilities and their family members. Most of the people with disabilities in Albania continue to feel marginalized as their basic needs for education, rehabilitation and employment are not met. What is more, many feel isolated and a burden to their families when they could be contributing members of the society.

Measure 2.3.1.

Prepare the legal framework for the free training of family caregivers of people with severe disabilities. Study the possibility of medical insurance and social security retirement for them.

Timeline:

2006

Implementing institutions: (a) Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity / State Social Service;
(b) local government;
(c) Institute of Medical Insurance (IMI)

Findings:

The legal framework for the free training of family caregivers of people with severe disabilities has not been prepared yet and no task force has been established.

A preliminary study on the cost of medical insurance and social security retirement of family caregivers has been conducted by MLSAEO. The preliminary calculations show the cost to be considerable.

Status: Very little progress

Measure 2.3.2.

Create the legal framework which ensures services which are free or at reduced prices for basic needs of people with sensory impairments such as readers, guides and sign language interpreters.

Timeline:

2007

Implementing institution: (a) MLSAEO / State Social Service;
(b) local government; (c) Institute of Medical Insurance

Findings:

No task force has been set up to work on this piece of legislation.

Status: No progress

Measure 2.4.

Improve the legislation to support disability NGOs to provide rehabilitation services.

Timeline:

Starting in 2006

Implementing institution: NGOs

Findings:

Law No. 9355, (03/19/05) "On the Social Services and Economic Assistance" has provisions on the role of non-profit organizations in offering services for people with disabilities and many organizations are offering rehabilitations services. An example is the National Center for the Rehabilitation of the Blind, which is run by the Association of the Albanian Blind People.

During 2007 the MLSAEO worked to open the Social Service Fund that would fund the services.

Status: Good progress

Measure 2.5. Ensure the legal framework for the sign language broadcast of a five-minute news bulletin.

Timeline: none written

Implementing institution: NGOs

Findings:

ANAD reports that nothing was written or approved in 2007. However, efforts were being made by the MLSAEO and ANAD to have a news bulletin in sign language broadcast by the Albanian Public Television.

Status: No progress

Measure 3.1. Create a statistical database on people with disabilities and update it regularly.

Timeline: 2005

Implementing institutions:(a) MLSAEO; (b) Ministry of Health; (c) INSTAT; (d) local government units; (e)NGOs;(f) academic institutions

Findings:

The National Disability Monitor publishes an annual report with the updated statistics on people with disabilities, based mostly on data from the MLSAEO. However, the data do not provide information on the prevalence and incidence of different disability categories and they do not reflect accurately the services provided by the non-profit organizations. The MLSAEO publishes its statistics on people with disabilities on its website. The data

reflect the categories of benefits, age, gender, and education level. There are no data according to the disability categories.

The Ministry of Education and Science only collects and publishes data on the special education schools. No data are collected on students with special needs integrated in the general education schools. No information is collected on the schools that have accessibility features and/or provide inclusive education. The Ministry of Health does not have a databank on disabilities, but it collects, processes and publishes information on the incidence of various diseases, some of which may be a cause of temporary or permanent disabilities.

Tirana municipality collects data on the disability benefit periodically. INSTAT publishes data on the beneficiaries of the disability benefit and the invalidity pension.

The disability associations with membership from specific disability categories collect data on their members.

Status: Some progress

Measure 3.2. Conduct studies regularly on people with disabilities, their categories, existing services, needs etc.

Timeline: Yearly

Implementing institutions:(a) MLSAEO; (b) Ministry of Health; (c) INSTAT; (d) National Disability Monitor

Findings:

National Disability Monitor has conducted the following studies: "The Social, Economic and Medical Situation of People with Disabilities in Albania," "Identification of Disabilities in Early Childhood," and "The Integration of Children with Disabilities in Schools."

MLSAEO, Ministry of Health and INSTAT did not conduct any studies during 2007. ADRF conducted two national studies during 2007. The first was an observation study on the fulfillment of human rights of people with intellectual disabilities in the areas of social services, health care, education, employments and vocational training. The study was funded by CORDAID. The second study was the Report on the Implementation of the National Strategy on People with Disabilities, funded by USAID.

Four Italians and one Albanian scholar published an article in the American Journal of Hematology entitled "AlFirst Factor IX Mutations in Albanian Hemophilia B Patients."

Status: Some progress

Measure 3.3. Establish a registry of people with disabilities with data from the population census

Timeline: Next census

Implementing institution: INSTAT

Findings:

National Disability Monitor has started work for the creation of the registry.

Status: Some progress

Measure 4.1. Create a database on the health and socio-economic situation of (a) people with hemophilia, and (b) people with cancer

Timeline: 2005-2006

Implementing institutions:(a) National Disability Monitor; (b) NGOs

Findings:

There is no official national database on the health and socio-economic situation of people with hemophilia, and (b) people with cancer.

The respective disability organizations have data on their members only.

Status: No progress

Measure 4.2. Conduct studies on the prevalence and incidence of different types of disabilities.

Timeline: 2005-2015

Implementing institutions:(a) Ministry of Health; (b) NGOs

Findings:

The data on the incidence and prevalence of different types of disabilities come mainly from the diagnoses of the MCDAW. If any studies were conducted during 2007 on this field, they were not made public.

Status: No progress

Measure 4.3. (a) Develop the disability terminology; (b) publish the criteria on national disability studies; and (c) Prepare a dictionary of disability terms.

Timeline: 2004-2005

Implementing institution: NGOs

Findings:

None of the NGOs participating in this study has been involved in this measure or has any knowledge of work done in this area. No publications were made.

Status: No progress

Measure 4.4. Publish the list of disabilities and their categorization according to potential social limitations.

Timeline: Starting in 2006

Implementing institutions: (a) Ministry of Education and Science; (b) MLSAEO; (c) Ministry of Health; (d) local government; (e) NGOs.

Findings:

The list of disabilities and their categorization according to potential social limitations has not yet been prepared.

Status: No progress

Measure 5.1. Publish periodical brochures and materials on people with disabilities, rehabilitation and integration, legislation reviews, useful information in regards to rights and freedoms, etc.

Timeline: Yearly

Implementing institutions: (a) Institutions; (b) NGOs

Findings:

The National Action Plan does not specify which institutions were assigned this responsibility. The MLSAEO has published a packet with relevant legislation (laws, DCMs and rules and regulations).

Several publications were made by ADRF, such as "Cases of the European Court of Strasbourg in the Area of Human Rights for People with Disabilities," Cases of ADRF Free Legal Aid Program," the guide "The Right to Employment," the update of the packet "Disability Legislation in Albania," the observation report "Overview of the Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities," the observation report on the local government elections, the guide on "Normative Dispositions For Public Schools and the Education of Students with Special Needs," a packet of standards on accessibility in urban constructions, as well as three issues of the magazine "Challenges," which covers issues of people with disabilities.

The Association of Albanian Blind People in Collaboration with the National Center for the Rehabilitation of the Blind published the proceedings of the First Scientific Conference on Visual Impairment, which was held in December 2006. The publication contains several studies and papers on different aspects of life of people with visual impairment in Albania. No information was provided by the other NGOs.

Status: Good progress

Measure 6.1. Collaborate with the media to establish a strategy of cooperation regarding the coverage of the issues of people with disabilities and accessibility of people with disabilities to information.

Timeline: Starting from 2005

Implementing institutions: (a) State Structures; (b) NGOs; (c) media.

Findings:

There is no strategy on the coverage of issues for people with disabilities in the media. The national Council of Radio and Television reports that it has favored the disability organizations by showing their commercials free of charge and including disability related events and activities in their news bulletins.

Status: No progress

Measure 6.2. Promote the initiative of people with disabilities through annual fairs with their products.

Timeline: Yearly

Implementing institutions: (a) Local Government Units; (b) NGOs

Findings:

No fairs with products of people with disabilities have been organized.

Status: No progress

Measure 6.3. Give the Award of Excellence in Disability Affairs to the institution which has made a noticeable contribution.

Timeline: Yearly

Implementing institution: MLSAEO

Findings:

No awards or prizes were distributed to people or institutions, which made a difference in the lives of people with disabilities in 2007.

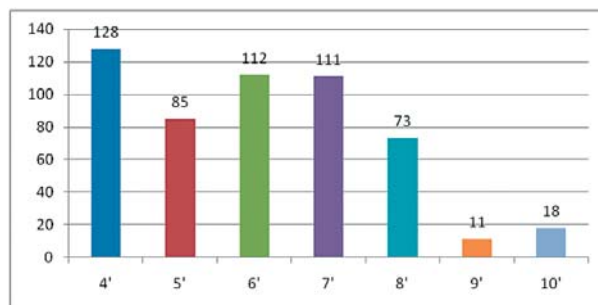
Status: No progress

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY CONDUCTED WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS

The participants in the survey, 464 people with disabilities and 458 family members were asked to grade three aspects related to this area: legislation, research and the perception of equality and non-discrimination in society. The current legislation that covers issues related to people with disabilities got the highest grade: 6.04.

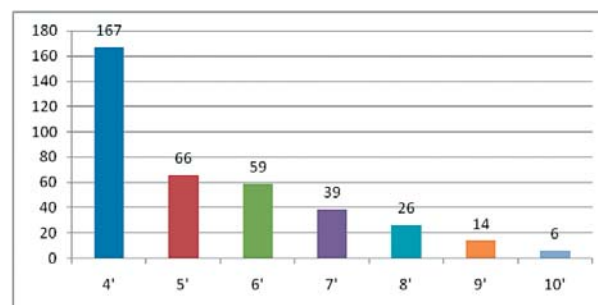
The participants were less satisfied with the number and quality of published studies in the field of disabilities, which received a mean grade of 5.36. The respondents feel that they are not treated as equals in the Albanian society: they graded their perception with a failing grade: 4.97; as about half of the participants (45.4%) gave it a 4. The Figures 39, 40, and 41 illustrate the distribution of grades.

Fig. 39. Legislation



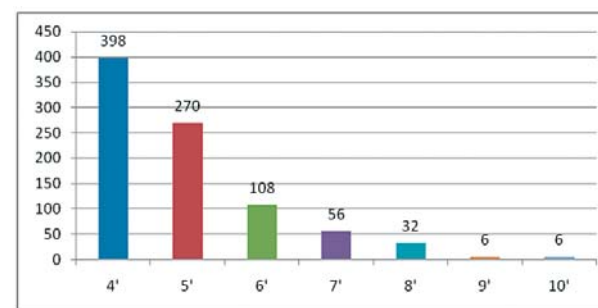
N= 538
M= 6.04
SD=1.6

Fig. 40. Research



N=377
M= 5.36
SD= 1.6

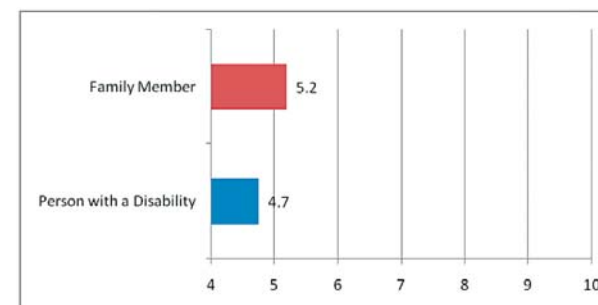
Fig. 41. Equality and non-discrimination



N= 876
M=4.97
SD=1.2

The perception of equality and nondiscrimination differs between family members and persons with disability. The latter feel it more and the difference is statistically significant ($p= .0001$). Fig. 42 illustrates the difference. Also, males have a more negative perception than females (respectively 4.9 and 5.05), but the difference was not statistically significant ($p=0.08$).

Fig.42. Perception of equality per category of respondent



DISCUSSION

Although people with disabilities and their family members feel that progress has been made in the area of legislation relevant to people with disabilities, very little progress was made during 2007 to fulfill the measures outlined in the Action Plan for the first objective, "Ensure full equality for people with disabilities through improvements in the legislation on social services, education, housing and telecommunication." Good progress was noted in two areas only, which means that 75% of the measures planned to be implemented in the period 2005-2007, were not carried out.

Table 26: Improvements in Legislation to Ensure Equality

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
1.1. Prepare the basis for the establishment of a separate state institution specialized in dealing with disability rights and issues.			No progress.
1.2. Conduct a study on the Albanian legislation that covers issues related to people with disabilities. Make comparisons with the related international standards and conventions.	2005-2006	MLSAEO, Ministry of Health, MES, Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Finances, Ministry of Justice	No progress by the assigned state agencies. Good progress by the NGOs.

1.3. Prepare an integral law on disability.	2006	MLSAEO, Ministry of Health, MES, Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Finances, Ministry of Justice	No progress.
1.4. Include an article that guarantees the inclusion of accessibility standards in all new constructions in the Law "On Urban Planning."	2005	MPWTT	Good progress.
1.5 Improve the existing legislation on transportation with the goal of making it accessible for people with disabilities.	2005 and ongoing	MPWTT	No progress.
1.6 Establish technical standard on the means of public transportation to ensure accessibility.	2006	MPWTT	No progress.
1.7 Amend the Road Code and the legislation that provides the technical conditions of the use of automotive means. Modify the regulations and technical specifications for the construction of public roads which are free of barriers.	2006	MPWTT	No progress.
1.8 Prepare a manual with instructions on how to make streets accessible for people with disabilities.	2005-2007	MPWTT	No progress.

The situation seems to be almost the same for the second objective related to improved access simplification of procedures related to people with disabilities: no progress was noted in four of the six measures (i.e., 66% of them).

Table 27: **Legislation in Regard to Improved Access and Simplification of Procedures**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
2.1. Prepare the respective legislation on the technical standards of adaptive equipment and teaching aids for children and students.	2006	MES MLSAEO/Social Insurance Institute/SSS Ministry of Health	No progress.
2.2. Improve legislation which excludes the equipment used by people with disabilities from customs fees.	2004-2005	MLSAEO / State Social Service; MES; NGOs	No progress.
2.3.1. Prepare the legal framework for the free training of family caregivers of people with severe disabilities. Study the possibility of medical insurance and social security retirement for them.	2006	MLSAEO / SSS local government IMI	Very little progress.
2.3.2. Create the legal framework which ensures services which are free or at reduced prices for basic needs of people with sensory impairments such as readers, guides and sign language interpreters.	2007	MLSAEO/ SSS local government; IMI	No progress.

2.4. Improve the legislation to support disability NGOs to provide rehabilitation services.	Starting in 2006	NGOs	Good progress.
2.5. Ensure the legal framework for the sign language broadcast of a five-minute news bulletin.		NGOs	No progress.

Some progress was noted towards the implementation of measures related to the third objective, "Ensure relevant and updated information and data on number, typology and social situation of people with disability."

However, it is still difficult to find statistical indicators on the prevalence and incidence of various disabilities and the students with disabilities integrated in regular education.

Table 28: **Statistical Data**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
3.1. Create a statistical database on people with disabilities and update it regularly.	2005	MLSAEO, Ministry of Health, local government units, NGOs, academic institutions.	Some progress.
3.2. Conduct studies regularly on people with disabilities, categories, existing services, needs etc.	Yearly	MLSAEO, Ministry of Health, INSTAT, National Disability Monitor	Some progress.
3.3. Establish a directory of people with disabilities with data from the population census.	Next Census	INSTAT	Some progress.

The state has provided no support on the research programs on the economic, social, and rehabilitation issues related to people with disabilities as described in measures 4.1-4.4. Likewise, the NGOs have shown no interest in this area. The realization index for this objective is zero.

Table 29: **Research**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
4.1. Create a database on the health and socio-economic situation of (a) people with hemophilia, and (b) people with cancer.	2005-2006	National Disability Monitor, NGOs	No progress.
4.2. Conduct studies on the prevalence and incidence of different types of disabilities.	2005-2015	Ministry of Health, NGOs.	No progress.
4.3. (a) Develop the disability terminology; (b) publish the criteria on national disability studies; (c) prepare a dictionary of disability terms.	2004-2005	NGOs	No progress.
4.4. Publish the list of disabilities and their categorization according to potential social limitations.	Starting in 2006	MES, MLSAEO, Ministry of Health, local government, NGOs	No progress.

Good progress has been made on the publication of materials related to the rights of people with disabilities as stated in the fifth objective of this area. The major contributors were ADRF and the Association of the Blind People who secured funding from international donors.

Table 30: **Publications Related to Rights of People with Disabilities**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
5.1. Publish periodical brochures and materials on people with disabilities, rehabilitation and integration, legislation reviews, useful information in regards to rights and freedoms, etc.	Yearly	NGOs	Good progress

None of the measures described as necessary to achieve the sixth objective, "Support the education programs against the discrimination of people with disabilities" was carried out.

Table 31: **Education Programs**

Measure	Timelines	Responsible Institution(s)	Status of Progress
6.1. Collaborate with the media to establish a strategy of cooperation regarding the coverage of the issues of people with disabilities and accessibility of people with disabilities to information.	Starting in 2005	State Structures NGOs media	No progress.
6.2. Promote the initiative of people with disabilities through annual fairs with their products.	Yearly	Local government NGOs	No progress.
6.3. Give the Award of Excellence in Disability Affairs to the institution which has made a noticeable contribution.	Yearly	MLSAEO	No progress.

As a total, 75% of the measures for this area were not carried out. The different ministries that were assigned responsibility did not take it seriously and failed to deliver in an area that is vital to the quality of life of people with disabilities. The reality of the perception expressed by people with disabilities that they are discriminated against and are not treated as equal citizens is reinforced by these findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The acceleration of the process for the creation of a complete legislative framework in the area of disabilities is required to create the foundation for the completion of most of the tasks of the NSPD. Furthermore, the intensification of research is needed to provide guidance to the creation of new policies. The following recommendations address these needs:

1. The MLSAEO needs to restart the process of the evaluation of the legislation in the field of disabilities to lay the groundwork for the preparation of the integral disability law.
2. The MLSAEO needs to encourage the creation of joint legislation of other ministries, as assigned by the National Action Plan, by taking the initiative to start the process.
3. The MPWTT needs to analyze and organize the legal framework on accessibility in buildings, roads and telecommunication so that it becomes easy to implement.
4. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of the Interior need to write and approve the necessary by laws that provide guidance for the implementation of the existing disability-related legislation in the respective fields.
5. The MLSAEO needs to formulate a program of national studies in the field of disabilities in conformity with the National Action Plan of the NSPD and take a leadership role in the collaborative process with other ministries.

APPENDIX ONE

LIST OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Area/Institution	Persons Who Collected Information
Tirane	ADRF office
1. MLSAEO	
2. MPWTT	
3. Ministry of Health	
4. Ministry of Education and Science	
5. Ministry of the Interior	
6. National Employment Service	
7. State Social Service	
8. National Housing Body	
9. National Disability Monitor	
10. National Council on the Regulation of the Territory	
11. Ministry of Tourism Culture Youth and Sports	
12. Central Election Commission	
13. Tirana Municipality	
14. Regional Office of Social Services	
15. Regional Office of Public Health	
16. Department of Education	
17. Regional Office of the National Employment Service	
18. Local Office of the National Housing Body	
Korçe	Evis Miço (ADRF)
14. Regional Office of Social Services	
15. Regional Office of Public Health	
16. Department of Education	
17. Regional Office of the National Employment Service	
18. Local Office of the National Housing Body	

19. Municipality
Elbasan Luiza Popja (ADRF)
20. Regional Office of Social Services
21. Regional Office of Public Health
22. Department of Education
23. Regional Office of the National Employment Service
24. Local Office of the National Housing Body
25. Municipality
Shkoder Marita Sopi (ADRF)
26. Regional Office of Social Services
27. Regional Office of Public Health
28. Department of Education
29. Regional Office of the National Employment Service
30. Local Office of the National Housing Body
31. Municipality
Durres Xhulieta Hasho
32. Regional Office of Social Services
33. Regional Office of Public Health
34. Department of Education
35. Regional Office of the National Employment Service
36. Local Office of the National Housing Body
37. Municipality
Vlore Fatmira Çaçi (ADRF)
38. Regional Office of Social Services
39. Regional Office of Public Health
40. Department of Education
41. Regional Office of the National Employment Service
42. Local Office of the National Housing Body
43. Municipality
44. "Ismail Qemali" University of Vlora
- Nongovernmental Organizations**
45. The Association of Albanian Invalids
46. MEDPAK
47. ADRF
48. ANAD

INFORMATION SOURCES FOR EACH AREA

I. ACCESIBILITY

1. Ministry of Health
2. Ministry of Education and Science
3. Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Telecommunication
4. National Home Building State Enterprise
5. Vlore Office of National Housing Body
6. Elbasan Home Buildings State Enterprise
7. Durres Regional Office of the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Telecommunication
8. Shkoder Regional Office of Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Telecommunication
9. Vlore Regional Department of Health
10. Elbasan Regional Department of Health
11. Korçe Regional Department of Health
12. Vlore Municipality
13. Tirana Municipality
14. Durres Municipality
15. Elbasan Municipality
16. Korçe Municipality
17. Shkoder Municipality

II. SERVICES

1. Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
2. Ministry of Education and Science
3. State Social Service
4. Ministry of Health

5. Shkoder Regional Office of SSS
6. Tirane Municipality
7. Durres Municipality
8. Vlore Regional department of Health
9. Elbasan Regional Office of State Social Service
10. Elbasan Regional Department of Health
11. Korce Regional Office of State Social Service
12. Durres Hospital
13. Korce Regional Department of Health
14. Vlore Municipality
15. Vlore Regional office of State Social Service
16. Korce Municipality
17. Korce Regional Department of Education
18. Shkoder Regional Department of Health
19. Shkoder Municipality
20. ADRF
21. Association of Albanian Invalids
22. ANAD
23. MEDPAK

III. EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

1. Vlore Regional Office of Social Insurance
2. Ministry of Education
3. Elbasan Municipality
4. Elbasan Regional Department of Education
5. Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports
6. Vlore Regional Labor Office
7. Tirana Municipality
8. Durres Municipality
9. Shkoder Regional Department of Education
10. Shkoder Municipality
11. Vlore Regional Department of Education
12. Vlore Municipality
13. The Association of Labor Invalids (Shoqata e Invalideve)
14. MEDPAK (Defending the Rights of PWD)
15. Elbasan Regional Labor Office

16. Tirane Regional Labor Office
17. Durres Regional Labor Office
18. Shkoder Regional Labor Office
19. Korce Regional Labor Office
20. Elbasan Regional Office of Social Insurance
21. Durres Regional Office of Social Insurance
22. Institute of Social Insurance
23. ANAD (Albanian National Association of the Deaf)
24. National Labor Service
25. Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunity
26. ADRF (Albanian Disability Rights Foundation)

IV. CAPACITY BUILDING

1. State Social Service
2. Elbasan Regional Office of SSS
3. Tirane Regional Office of SSS
4. Shkoder Regional Office of SSS
5. Korce Regional Office of Social Insurance
6. Korce Regional Office of Social Insurance
7. Vlore Regional Office of Social Insurance
8. Durres Regional Office of Social Insurance
9. Elbasan Regional Office of Social Insurance
10. Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunity
11. Disability Technical Secretariat
12. ADRF (Albanian Disability Rights Foundation)

V. LEGISLATION AND RESEARCH

1. Vlore Regional Office of Social Insurance
27. Elbasan Regional Office of Social Insurance
1. Elbasan Regional Department of Health
2. Elbasan Municipality
3. Elbasan Regional Office of Social Services
4. MEDPAK
5. Association of Albanian Invalids.
6. Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports
7. Tirana Municipality

8. Durres Regional office of Social Insurance
9. Durres Municipality
10. Korce Municipality
11. Korce Regional Department of Health
12. Korce Regional Office of Social Services
13. Korce Regional office of Social Insurance
14. Shkoder Regional Office of Social Services
15. Shkoder Regional office of Social Insurance
16. Shkoder Municipality
17. Vlore Municipality
18. Vlore Regional Department of Health
19. Vlore Regional Office of Social Services
20. National Disability Monitor
21. Ministry of Health
22. Institute of Medical Insurance
23. Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Telecommunication
24. State Social Service
25. Ministry of the Interior
26. Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunity
27. National Council of Radio and Television
28. Shkoder Regional Department of Health
29. ANAD
30. Ministry of Education and Science
31. ADRF (Albanian Disability Rights Foundation)

APPENDIX TWO

SAMPLES OF GOVERNMENT PAPERWORK RELATED TO THE STUDY

**REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SOCIAL AFFAIR AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE
DIRECTORATE GENERAL**

Boulevard "Bajram Curri", close to former hotel "Arbana", Tirana,
Tel/Fax ++355 4 340056, +355 4 340057

www.shkp.gov.al

Prot. No. 1189/1

Tirana, on 29/05/2008

Subject: Response

To: Ms. Blerta Çani

Executive Director

Albanian Disability Rights Foundation

In reply to your request for cooperation in the area of promoting the implementation of the National Strategy for People with Disabilities (NSPWD), Ms. Evis Fico is appointed as a focal point in our institution to keep direct and regular contacts with you for carrying out this process.

Thank you,

General Deputy Director
Spiro Kuro

REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
Ministry of Labor, Social Affair and Equal Opportunities
Directorate of Social Services Policies

Prot. No. 84

Tirana, on 05/02/2008

Subject: Letter of support for the activity of the Albanian Disability Rights Foundation (ADRF)

Ministry of Labour, Social Affair and Equal Opportunities recognizes the positive contribution of the Albanian Disability Rights Foundation in protecting and realizing the rights and interests of all the people with disabilities.

For some years now, this foundation has been functioning as a resource center in the field of disabilities, through researches, analysis of the legislation on PWD, publications, awareness raising campaigns, lobbying, support for the institutions in drafting and improving strategies and policies on disabilities.

MLSAEO supports and encourages the initiatives undertaken by ADRF and assesses them as very helpful for the improvement of the status of disabled persons and for the enhancement of opportunities for them to be able to exercise their rights.

The Foundation staff has supported and assisted the working group in drafting the National Strategy for People with Disabilities. In addition, the staff has monitored and continues to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan by the respective institutions.

MLSAEO is ready to provide to ADRF any kind of official information available in the area of disability. This information is necessary for these monitoring processes, for a real and transparent presentation of the achievements in this area.

MINISTER
KOÇO BARKA