

On 22.12.2009 Inter-Municipal Association of Physically Disabled Persons – Bitola, Demir-Hisar Resen signed Grant Contract - European Union External Actions - EIDHR/2009/216-825 with the Delegation of the European Union for implementation of the project to promote ratification and implementation of the UN Convention for people with disabilities. This project was approved and selected for funding by the Delegation of the European Union and Inter-Municipal Association of Physically Disabled Persons – Bitola, Resen, Demir-Hisar, in partnership with Gauss Bitola Institute were awarded funding for this project.

The traditional annual parade of people with disabilities in Bitola this year was organized within the project "Promotion of the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" as a sign to promote the ratification and implementation of the Convention in our country. This year the event has expanded nationwide with the National Association of Physically Disabled Persons of Macedonia and National Council of Disability Organizations of Macedonia. This day initiated process of signing petition addressed to the President, Parliament, ministers and all relevant government authorities for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This parade is the peak of the current activities within the project.

Activity No.7 in the grant contract is organizing the parade in Bitola.

The activities associated with this event were initiated by sending invitations to all relevant authorities, other NGOs across the country and generally call for the public to participate. Invitations were sent to the President, the Prime Minister, all ministers, all members of the Assembly, the organizations of persons with disabilities in Macedonia, including organizations of persons with impaired sight, hearing, etc.. and other NGOs from different spheres.

The press conference was organized on 08.10.2010 in the Hotel Epinal and was attended by numerous media members who were familiarized with the objectives of the project. Great interest was expressed for both the Association and the Union, but mostly for the project as the first of its kind realized by members of the Association of Persons with physical disabilities. It covers many crucial issues from the entire life of persons with disabilities.

The following day, on 09.10.2010, commenced the realization of the parade. Thanks to the Mayor of Bitola Municipality, Mr. Vladimir Taleski, the stage and the technical support for this event were provided.

Participants of the event, members of disability organizations across the country began to arrive before the agreed start of the event in 11:00 hours. Of the expected 500 participants from these organizations, a significant number arrived with the organized transportation or in some cases with their own vehicle which is inevitable given that it comes to people with certain disabilities.

In addition to people with disabilities an important element of this event was the presence of HE Ambassador Erwan Fouéré who sincerely supported the initiative of the implementators of this project (Inter-Municipal Association of Physically Disabled Persons – Bitola, Demir-Hisar, Resen and Gauss Institute - Bitola.) for organizing this event. HE Ambassador Erwan Fouéré noted that this parade is a strong message that is sent to the competent institutions to quickly ratify the Convention, which will help people with disabilities to feel equal and non-discriminated. "This event organized by the associations from all cities show their courage

and determination to do something and pass legislation that would regulate their rights," said EU Ambassador Erwan Fouéré. (Bitola Newspaper, p.4, 13.10.2010)

The course of the events on this manifestation is according to the following program:

11:00 Arrival of participants

11:30 Opening of the Parade – introductory speech by Prim. Dr. Niko Jankov, President of the Inter-municipal Association of Physically Disabled Persons - Bitola, Demir Hisar and Resen.

Greeting speeches:

- Mr. Vladimir Taleski, Mayor of the Municipality of Bitola.
- HE Ambassador Erwan Fouéré, Special Representative of the European Union and Head of the Delegation of the European Union.
- Mr. Miodrag Ignjatovik, President of the National Union of Physically Disabled Persons.

12:15 Parade through Shirok Sokak from the square "Magnolia" to the Sports Hall "Mladost"

The president of the Inter-municipal Association of Physically Disabled Persons - Bitola, Demir Hisar and Resen opened the event with a convenient short speech. The speech was preceded by welcoming the attendees, including: Mayor of Bitola, Mr. Vladimir Taleski, His Excellency Ambassador Erwan Fouéré, Special Representative of the European Union and Head of Delegation of the European Union in Macedonia, Bitola members of Parliament, honorary consuls, numerous non-governmental organizations, representatives of associations of blind and deaf, representatives from the National Council of disability organizations, members of the seventeen associations of physically disabled persons and of course fellow citizens, all closely monitored by the media.

After the opening speech the letters from The President, Mr. Gorge Ivanov and the Minister of Culture Ms. Elizabeta Kancevska - Milevska were read. After that the organizer invited the Mayor, Mr Vladimir Taleski, HE Ambassador Erwan Fouéré and the President of the National Council of disability organizations, Mr. Branimir Jovanovski to greet the gathering.

Afterwards followed the walk across Shirok Sokak to the Sports hall "Mladost" and here were made statements to the media. This practically ended the parade activities and all guests were invited to lunch at the restaurant "Fonata Be-Ni" in the village Bistrica. The organizer once again expressed gratitude to all participants for their presence and active participation on the parade.

Upcoming activities of this project for the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is organizing a round table in Skopje, where we will discuss with ministers and MPs for the next steps to ratify and implement the Convention in Macedonia and in the end the final conference.

One of the key objectives of this project is the ratification of the Convention and the start of implementation during the realization of this project.