



НАЦИОНАЛНА ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈА ОСОБА СА ИНВАЛИДИТЕТОМ СРБИЈЕ

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Subject: Reactions from National Umbrella
Organisation of PWDs due to the
report "Torment not Treatment"

**To Ministry of Labor and Social Policy
- Minister Mr. Rasim Ljajic -**

Dear Mr. Ljajic,

We are referring to you due to the MDRI Report "Torment not Treatment" which caused a lot of mixed emotions in public and partly within the disability population and their parents and carers. We would like to express our states and considerations on that issue:

1. We are aware on situation in Institutions for Social Protection in Serbia and we believe that the pictures we saw in this Report are true, which was also confirmed by parents whose children were/are users in these institutions. General conditions in these institutions are difficult but much better than previous years.
2. Your statement on children conditions and employees (lack of employees, distance of their homes and working places, hard and complex work, low salaries etc.) confirmed "the picture" but at the same time reflects State willingness to improve these conditions and work on humanization children's life there as much as possible.
3. Looking at different TV broadcasts on this issue, we could not neglect the parents whose children are settled in these Institutions. We are sure that their decisions to put their children in residential settlement were hard, but at the same time the only possible, having in mind the fact that most of the time we are talking about single parents, unemployed parents, elderly or ill parents... Other reasons were also marginalization and exclusion of such families even in their local communities.

Due to all these circumstances and the conditions in our society during the last years, we are aware of the facts that human rights are violated to some extension in Institutions for Social Protection. National Umbrella Organisation of PWDs in Serbia would like to join the efforts to stop this situation. We are disappointed with this kind of status now, but unfortunately this one-sided research was done by International Organisation MDRI, instead of our State or relevant organization/Institution. We hope that this will be the warning to relevant Ministries to start seriously working on status and protection of persons with disabilities, in accordance to National and International legislation. First of

all we are thinking on existing Antidiscrimination Law, International Convention on Human Rights and UN Convention on Rights of PWDs. We think that public should be informed objectively on status of these Institutions in Serbia as well as programs of prevention of residential settlements, support programs for families and development of social services systems in last few years. Examples of good practice will give more completed picture on protection the most vulnerable groups in our society.

We were astonished that this research lasted four years and that relevant Ministry did not know that, so we are asking:

- Did you have any information on this research in previous period?
- If not, why principals of these Institutions did not inform you or ask for State support through regular procedure?
- Did parents/carers of children gave their permission to take picture of them and publish their photographs?

National Umbrella Organisation of PWDs in Serbia find its interest in respect the rights of PWDs, which will be the concrete reason to establish this organization. As we are working on our rights together with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, we would like to offer our help and support especially as our member organizations have great experience in this area on local, national and international level. We know that this is hard and a long term process but also would like to remind you that this is the one of urgent issues that should be solved. We see that as our mutual responsibility and would like to meet with you as soon as possibly to offer our concrete suggestions for solving this problem and to start working on this process.

Respectfully,

Ivanka Jovanovic
Executive Director
National Umbrella Organisation