

Hungarian NGOs Urge Government to Establish a Disability Ombudsman

1 October 2008. Budapest, Hungary. Today a coalition of thirteen non-governmental organisations sent a public letter to the Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány urging his government to comply with obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by establishing a Disability Ombudsman.

In June 2007 Hungary became the first European country to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a human rights treaty which came into force in May 2008. A requirement for countries which have ratified the Convention is to establish a body responsible for monitoring its implementation.

In their letter, the 13 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) suggest that the government creates the post of Disability Ombudsman to monitor the Convention's implementation in Hungary. Until such time as a Disability Ombudsman exists, the NGOs urge the government to make the necessary legislative changes to allow the general Ombudsman to be entrusted with this task. The NGOs also ask the government to allocate specific funding for the Ombudsman to carry out an expanded mandate.

Another Convention requirement is for governments to give civil society the opportunity to participate in public policy-making regarding disability issues. The coalition of NGOs asks the government to ensure the effective involvement of civil society organisations - and disabled people's organisations in particular - in all aspects of the Convention's implementation.

The coalition of NGOs encourages the government to announce its plans before 3 November 2008, the day of the first Conference of States Parties (an official meeting of all countries which have ratified the Convention) in New York. The coalition of NGOs is confident that the Hungarian government will continue to play a leading role within European Union in implementing the Convention.

The signatories of the letter are:

- o National Association of People with Autism
- o **National Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing**
- o National Association of People with Mobility Impairments
- o National Association of People with Intellectual Disability
- o National Association of the Blind
- o Mental Disability Advocacy Center
- o Soteria Foundation
- o Budapest Association of People with Mobility Impairments
- o Hand in Hand Foundation
- o Down Foundation
- o Mental Health Interest Forum
- o Central-Hungarian Regional Association of the Blind
- o Szigony Foundation for Community Psychiatry

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