

Bucharest, December 9th, 2022

# Report on citizens' perceptions of people with disabilities

The Association Assistance and Programs for Sustainable Development – Agenda 21 announces the launch of the Report on citizen's perceptions of people with disabilities. The study was elaborated within the project **"Our voice counts!"**, project implemented by the Association Assistance and Programs for Sustainable Development - Agenda 21 in partnership with the National Association of Librarians and Public Libraries from Romania, Startlight Petra Association and Norsensus Mediaforum Norway, with the financial support of the Active Citizens Fund Romania, programme funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through EEA Grants 2014-2021. The aim of the project is to change the mentality and attitude of the citizens of Bucharest, Buzău and Râmnicu Sărat through advocacy activities that promote human and children rights, designed to combat stereotypes, prejudices and practices of exclusion and marginalization that affect children and young people with hearing and vision impairments, and their families.

The research was carried out after conducting an opinion poll (1200, 18+) - in the municipalities of Bucharest, Buzău and Râmnicu Sărat. Its objectives were aimed at identifying the level of awareness of the needs and rights of people with disabilities, as well as validating the importance of some proposals aimed at contributing to the respect of these rights, with a view to social affirmation and the foundation of practices/policies appropriate to the reference categories.

Some of the conclusions of the study show that: in general, the rights of people with disabilities are little known; most of the participants in the survey rather believe that people with disabilities encounter difficulties in asserting their rights in Romanian society; the biggest contributions to the lack of affirmation of the rights of persons with disabilities are due to the educational and family environment of the person with disabilities (beyond the sectoral policies and strategies dedicated to the issue of the rights of persons with disabilities, it is important to access informal mechanisms); the level of awareness of the Romanian society regarding the rights of persons with disabilities is generally at a low level.

At least at the declarative level, people with disabilities have a positive (conciliatory-protective) social image, according to the opinions expressed by the people participating in the survey. In other words, the agreement regarding some cliché statements (frequently used in the public space) about people with disabilities has a low frequency. In conclusion, the social representation of the disabled person excludes their culpability (burden, incapable, permanently dependent on help, etc.).

Regarding the attitude towards the rights of people with disabilities, it was found that almost 80% of those who answered the questionnaire have a rather favorable attitude, and almost 6% - a rather unfavorable attitude (the rest being the people who did not answer the this question).

Among the recommendations resulting from the study, we mention the lack of information of the population (of society, in general) regarding the existence and content of reference rights. The absence of a strong connection between the knowledge of the rights of persons with disabilities and the latter's possibilities to assert and promote their rights in Romanian society signals that the issue of rights is located in an area characterized (rather) by disinterest and passivity. Regarding the distribution of opinions regarding the barriers that contribute to the lack of affirmation of the rights of persons with disabilities, the analysis of the extremes indicates a notable difference: the educational environment of the person with disabilities (62%) and the social circle, other than the familiar or kinship (53%).

Beyond a common perception that "people with disabilities are dealt with by Social Assistance", the existing specific measures and policies (incidence in employment, housing, taxation, the legal field, etc.) are almost unknown. That is why there is a need for better communication and public information, in which concrete content is presented, not generic announcements... Moreover, in addition to information and awareness campaigns - which rather aim at notoriety (knowledge) and social awareness (awareness of the issue of reference) - actions dedicated to resource allocation mechanisms intended to support and promote the rights of people with disabilities are also needed (for

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example, presentations by specialists, dissemination of good practices for collecting and allocating resources, implicitly ensuring the replicability of these practices, etc.) .

The full study is available on the association's website [www.agenda21.org.ro](http://www.agenda21.org.ro)

For more information, contact person Nina Cugler, president of the Association Assistance and Programs for Sustainable Development – Agenda 21, e-mail [ninacugler@agenda21.org.ro](mailto:ninacugler@agenda21.org.ro)

#### About Active Citizens Fund Romania

The Active Citizens Fund Romania programme is funded through the EEA Grants 2014-2021. The overall objective of the Grants is to reduce economic and social disparities, and to strengthen bilateral relations between 15 beneficiary countries and the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). The programme is administered by a consortium composed of Civil Society Development Foundation, Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation, Resource Center for Roma Communities, PACT Foundation and Frivillighet Norge, acting as Fund Operator designated by FMO – Financial Mechanism Office of the EEA and Norway Grants. The objectives of the Active Citizens Fund Romania are to strengthen civil society and active citizenship and to empower vulnerable groups. With a total allocation of 46,000,000 euro, the programme pursues a long-term development of the civil society sector sustainability and capacity, stepping up its role in promoting democratic participation, active citizenship and human rights, while strengthening bilateral relations with organizations from the Donor States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. For more information about the Active Citizens Fund in Romania, please go to [www.activecitizensfund.ro](http://www.activecitizensfund.ro). For more information about the EEA and Norway Grants, go to [www.eeagrants.org](http://www.eeagrants.org).

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