**THE RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE PROVIDED BY THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

*Recreation and leisure*

1. **Does your country have laws, policies, plans, strategies or guidelines and departments at any level of government relating to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream (not disability-specific) recreational and leisure physical activity, including but not limited to:**
* **Private settings:** Private gymnasiums, sports clubs, sports associations and foundations, summer camps, marathons, swimming pools, among others;
* **Public and private tourism** **platforms:** tourism facilities (e.g. beach, mountain, forest, among others), including services for persons with disabilities;
* **Public settings in urban areas:** Urban sports trail, cycling trails, public physical training, yoga, recreational sports, and playgrounds for children, recreational facilities for older persons, among others.
* **Nature trails:** hiking trails, nature centers, toilets, viewing platforms, count with accessibility and services.

According to the suggestions of all the interested stakeholders, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia develops and submits for the approval to the Government of the Republic of Armenia an "[Annual Program of Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and a List of Events](http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=151888)," which includes all the fields of leisure and recreation, including sportive activities.

In particular, [the Protocol Decision N1-1](https://www.e-gov.am/protocols/item/704/) of the Government of the Republic of Armenia adopted on January 12, 2017 approved the "Complementary Program on the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for 2017-2021." The complementary program envisages clear measures aimed at ensuring equal conditions for persons with disabilities, social inclusion in all the main areas of public life: culture, sports, information, urban development, etc. In particular, the Point 5 of the [Appendix](https://www.e-gov.am/u_files/file/decrees/arc_voroshum/2017/01/ardz_voroshum-kq002_1.pdf) 2 of the complementary program defines 15 measures aimed at promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in sports and cultural life. Moreover, the program envisages the adaptation of the 25% of the public buildings to the needs of persons with disabilities until 2021.

In order to implement the target areas envisaged by the complementary program the "Annual Program for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities" is developed and submitted to the Government for the approval on an annual basis. According to the established measures, programs aimed to protect the rights of persons with disabilities are conducted by the relevant state agencies.

*Education*

2(a).**Does your country have laws, policies, plans, strategies or guidelines on physical education in public and private schools, including in special education, informal education and extra-curricular activities, relating to the inclusion of persons with disabilities, particularly children and young people, to avoid their exclusion or exemption from physical education and facilitating contact with disability-specific sports? What are the objectives of these instruments?**

The Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Making Addenda and Amendments to the Law of the Republic of Armenia on the "General Education" [(HO-200-N)](https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=94683)" (December 1, 2014) envisages the transition of the system of the general education of the Republic of Armenia to the universal inclusive education until 2025.

As for 2020, the universal inclusive education has already been provided to the 8 provinces of the Republic of Armenia and to the capital city of Yerevan, which means that children with special educational needs, including children with disabilities, attend public schools with their peers and participate at the courses of physical education on an equal basis. If necessary, teachers are guided by the individual curriculum of a child with special educational needs.

**2(b)(i). Are teachers and professors of physical education trained to include students with disabilities in either mainstream or disability-specific physical education?**

Since 2012, the training modules for the teachers/trainers of the course of physical education have been organized aimed to get the certification. However, it is of an utmost significance to state that since the beginning the given trainings have included a component of classes organized for the group of students with different health issues, including the group of students with special educational needs.

**2(b)(ii). Do persons with disabilities who want to be teachers and professors of physical education have access to equal certification to exercise the profession?**

According to the Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia[[1]](#footnote-1) discrimination based on sex, race, skin color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, world view, political or other views, belonging to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances shall be prohibited. Therefore, persons with disabilities who want to be teachers and professors of physical education have a right and access to education as well as a right to an equal certification to exercise their specific profession.

**2(c). What are the challenges to implementing the above? Are you aware of any good practices related to the above?**

Persons with disabilities in the Republic of Armenia enter the universities via special procedure (in accordance with the specially developed standards). The Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture and Sport provides persons with disabilities with the auditorium tailored to their needs, as well as with the recreational ramps and toilets.

Tigran Gevorgyan, a world swimming champion, alumni of the Yerevan State Technological College, cook and makeup artist, currently works at the “TMM: Teach Me More” Educational Center as an Assistant to the Special Teacher. He is twenty four years old and has a Down syndrome (also known as trisomy 21).[[2]](#footnote-2) He won the gold medal in the open water swimming at the 2011 Special Olympics held in Athens and then again at the 2015 Special Olympics held in Los Angeles.

Children who attend the therapy lessons at the TMM Educational Center are diagnosed with different mental health issues such as autism, Down syndrome, etc. The young specialist teaches them to speak, write, count as well as he teaches them to distinguish colors, animals and provides them with many important skills and life hacks.

*Sports*

**3(a). Does your country have national, regional and local sports departments addressing and promoting competitive sports that cover both mainstream and disability-specific sports, either integrated or separated?**

The Department of Sport is included in the structure of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia. The main priorities and aims of such Department are the policy development and elaboration aimed at the inclusion of the vast majority of the population into the sportive activities, the organization of youth sports, the promotion of the highest achievements in the sports by the Republic of Armenia on the international arena as well as the provision of support to the participation of persons with disabilities in the competitions at all possible levels (such as local competitions, European and World Championships, Paralympics, Deaflympics[[3]](#footnote-3), Special Olympics[[4]](#footnote-4) and other international championships).

**3(b). Do disability-specific competitions have a similar structure to mainstream competitions, either integrated or separated, to organize local, regional, national, continental and international competition?**

There are 4 main directions in the sports envisaged for persons with disabilities: visual and hearing impairment, musculoskeletal system diseases and mental disorders. Local, regional, national, European and international competitions are being held separately for persons with the above-mentioned health issues. However, it should be stated that the local competitions organized within the Republic of Armenia for persons with disabilities are not so many compared to the ones held abroad.

**3(c). What are the challenges that persons with disabilities face to access training centers prepared for high-performance sports at local, regional and national levels?**

In order to access the training centers, persons with disabilities enjoy the same equal conditions prescribed by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia. The only challenge that persons with disabilities are facing is the issue of accessibility to the building (recreational ramps, elevators, toilets, etc.). It should be mentioned that not all the sports schools in the Republic of Armenia are adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities. Thus, the provision of the accessibility to the sports schools and gyms should be the top priority for the Government of the Republic of Armenia. The main challenge in this sphere is the lack of resources as an enormous amount of resources is needed for this particular purpose. It is unfortunate to admit that none of the sports schools of the Republic of Armenia is attended by a child or a group of children with disabilities.

Another challenge is a lack of experience of the teaching staff who directly works with a child or a group of children with disabilities. Coaching/teaching staff needs special trainings in order to work with a child or a group of children with disabilities.

**3(d). Are there laws, policies and mechanisms in place to ensure fair distribution of public grants, awards and other financial support to ensure that sportspersons with disabilities have equal opportunities to succeed in competitive sports?**

On September 7, 2017, by the Decision N38 of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia the [“Concept of the Development of Sport for Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Armenia”](http://escs.am/files/files/2019-08-07/f7cc7df45d2a0edf6884c8d42c02e1bf.pdf) has been elaborated and approved.

All the relevant state agencies and other interested stakeholders collaborate in order to promote the inclusiveness and engagement of persons with disabilities into the sportive activities via different programs. For example, the program entitled the “Provision of Services to the Adaptive Sport” is another proof of the effective collaboration between the relevant state agencies and the non-governmental organizations. The program aims to engage persons with disabilities in the sportive activities by the initiative of the NGOs and via the means of the state budget of the Republic of Armenia. These organizations help persons with visual and hearing impairment, musculoskeletal system diseases and mental disorders to express themselves and fully integrate into the society through the organization of the physical education courses and sportive activities adapted to their special needs.

Since 2015, the athletes with disabilities who hit high scores at the sports competitions and championships are get paid along with their coaches, medical staff and the sports organizations they belong to. The athletes who achieved high scores during the Paralympics, Deaflympics, World and European Championships while representing the Republic of Armenia are awarded with the special prize by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia along with their coaches. The amount of the award and the special prize varies. Unfortunately, it should be admitted that persons with disabilities receive less.

Since 2014, the "Best Sports Family” contest has been held in the Republic of Armenia via the means of the state budget. During the finals the family members with disabilities are also participating in the contest.

Since 2015, the "Best Athlete with Disabilities" contest has been held via the means of the state budget. Persons with visual and hearing impairment, musculoskeletal system diseases and mental disorders from all the provinces of the Republic of Armenia and from all the administrative districts of the capital city of Yerevan participate in the contest.

**3(e). Please provide information on the organizational structures of disability-specific sports, including examples and good practices. Kindly consider the following aspects when replying:**

* **Are they separate structures, or are they integrated into mainstream federations and clubs?**

The following organizations are well known in the Republic of Armenia for their activities aimed at the development of the courses of the physical education adapted to persons with disabilities:

* “National Paralympic Committee of Armenia”,
* “Armenian Union of Blind People”, “Armenian Union of Deaf People”, “Armenian Special Olympics”, “Armenian National Federation of Disability Sport”, “Armenian Table Tennis Federation for of Disabled People” and “Pyunik” Armenian Association for the Disabled NGO.

The above-mentioned structures are independent organizations and function separately.

* **Are they decentralized covering the whole territory or they only operate in capital city/area?**

They operate mainly in the capital but some of them have branches in the provinces of the Republic of Armenia.

* **Are they sports-discipline specific, or they integrate multiple disciplines?**

The following sports trainings are organized in the Republic of Armenia: boccia, goalball, arm wrestling, weightlifting, table tennis, athletics, wheelchair racing, Alpine skiing, wrestling, futsal, five-a-side football/blind football/, judo, volleyball for persons with the hearing problems, chess checkers (for persons with hearing and visual impairment), sailing, swimming, wheelchair basketball for persons with physical disabilities. The Federations of the Republic of Armenia are specialized in one specific sports-discipline adapted to the special needs of persons with disabilities, however the various organizations functioning in the Republic of Armenia integrate multiple disciplines.

* **Do they receive equal funding opportunities compared to mainstream sports?**

The funding opportunities are not equal in case of the Republic of Armenia as compared to the mainstream sports the level of funding for thedisability-specific sports is low. Moreover, the funding of the latter is pretty much depends on the achieved scores (medals, prizes, awards etc.) The Government of the Republic of Armenia finances the participation in the Paralympics, Deaflympics and the trainings of athletes who won the right to participate in those Games. In general, the Government of the Republic of Armenia does not fund the trainings of the athletes with disabilities as well as the Government does not cover medical expenses and does not pay salaries to the coaches.

Despite the fact that the Government set the priority to promote and encourage the sportive activities for persons with disabilities, still the unequivocal attention and adequate funding are needed for the development of physical culture and sports for persons with disabilities in the Republic of Armenia as no tangible results have been registered and the adaption of the physical culture, sports and the courses of the physical education has not been ensured so far.

* **Are joint activities between sportspersons in disability-specific sports and mainstream sports encouraged or carried out to facilitate exchange among sportspersons within similar disciplines?**

Currently, no joint activities between sportspersons in disability-specific sports and mainstream sports are carried out in the Republic of Armenia.

* **Are persons with disabilities considered in sports beyond their role as sportspersons, including as referees, coaches, spectators, administrators, workers, volunteers in the sports industry, board members, among others?**

Persons with disabilities are considered as athletes. It is of an utmost significance for the Republic of Armenia to engage athletes with disabilities in the sportive activities, initiate and organize sports events for persons with special needs. The National Paralympic Committee of the Republic of Armenia is currently engaged to train the athletes with disabilities to become coaches and referees in the near future. Moreover, the three athletes with disabilities nowadays are board members of the Committee.

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Armenia; <https://www.president.am/en/constitution-2015/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Down's syndrome is a [genetic disorder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetic_disorder) caused by the presence of all or part of a third copy of [chromosome 21](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chromosome_21). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Also known as the World Games for the Deaf, and International Games for the Deaf. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Special Olympics is the world's largest sports organization for children and adults with intellectual disabilities and physical disabilities [↑](#footnote-ref-4)