**Relevant information of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan in connection with the questionnaire on support systems to ensure community inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.**

***1(a). Does your country have laws, policies, plans, strategies or programs at any level of government relating to individualized support for persons with disabilities? In particular initiatives related to****:*

1. ***Communication: Support to overcome barriers that limit the ability to communicate and be understood (e.g., sign language interpretation, tactile interpretation, assistive technology and software, easy-to-read and plain language, captioning, augmentative communication, among others);***

The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Protocol on October 2, 2008. The **new Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**" was prepared in line with the Convention and adopted on May 31, 2018.

Due to implementation of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan of July 18, 2018, No.213 "On the Application of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, **17 normative-legal acts** were drafted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population (MLSPP) of the Republic of Azerbaijan and submitted to the government. All of them were approved by the government.

Among the drafts prepared are the "Criteria of disability assessment", "Rules for reasonable accommodation of infrastructure facilities for the use of persons with disabilities", "Procedure for maintaining the register of persons of disabilities", "Standards of workplaces of persons with disabilities", as well as an Individual Rehabilitation Program which includes implementation of social rehabilitation.

The Ministry of Education drafted a law on amendments to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" regarding the **recognition of sign language** as an official language used by the state. The draft was submitted to the government for approval after coordination with the relevant government agencies. In addition, "Sign Language" - dactyls and gestures are used as a means of communication in special boarding schools and preschools for children with hearing and speech impairments. Textbooks for Native language and Mathematics, Workbook on Mathematics for primary grades for Children with Hearing Impairments (Grades 1-4), and Methodical Handbook for Teachers are published.

At the initiative of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, the Information Computing Centre of the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport has created a "**Talking Library**" for people with visual impairment. Up to 286 professionally sounded books are placed in the library. Through the library, it is possible to listen to the literature resources of 8 genres - folk, modern, foreign, poetry, historical, religious, children's and classical literature. The "Talking book" website and mobile application developed by the MLSPP for children with visual impairment has been launched.

To create equal conditions and opportunities for the effective use of internet information services by persons with disabilities, the MLSPP prepared a draft amendment to the Order No 189 of the Cabinet of Ministers on approval of the "**Requirements for creation and management of Internet resources of state agencies**" that was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers’ Resolution No. 1 of January 7, 2020. According to the new project 4 basic principles of WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guideline) 2.1 (Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, Robust) were followed to enhance accessibility of persons with disabilities to internet information resources of state agencies.

1. ***Decision-making: Support to make decisions and exercise legal capacity. This includes assistance to: (a) obtain and understand information, (b) evaluate the possible alternatives and consequences of a decision, (c) express and communicate a decision, and/or (d) implement a decision (e.g., support agreements, peer support, self-advocacy support, advance directives, crisis support, financial management assistance, among others);***

According to Article 6.4 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities", persons with disabilities have the right to defend their rights and legitimate interests in administrative and judicial proceedings. According to Article 34 of the Law, persons with disabilities who are involved in administrative proceedings and judicial proceedings and who need special intermediaries are provided with services of specialized intermediaries (readers and professional sign language interpreters).

Pursuant to Article 39 of the Civil Code, patronage may be assigned upon the request of a natural person who reached adulthood and is unable to exercise and protect his rights independently and to perform his duties for health reasons, and the patronage may be terminated upon his/her request. Assignment of patronage does not entail restriction of individual's rights. Thus, the patron (assistant) is appointed by the body of trusteeship and guardianship with the consent of the natural person and disposes of the property belonging to him/her in accordance with the assignment or trust management agreement with the natural person. The patron (assistant) makes household deals aimed at maintaining household needs and other deals, with the consent of the natural person.

At the same time, pursuant to section 22 of the "Guidelines on the Regulations of Notary Actions in the Republic of Azerbaijan" approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of September 11, 2000, No. 167 in the event that the person cannot sign a deal, application or other document due to a physical limitation, illness or any other reason, deal, application or other document can be signed by another person at his/her order, with his/her participation, and with the participation of a notary public or an assistant of a notary public. In this case, the reason for the failure of the applicant to sign the document for the notarial actions must be indicated.

If the person applying for the notarial actions is illiterate or is a person with visual impairment, the notary public shall read the text of the document and make a note in this regard in the document. If a person with visual, hearing and speech impairment applying for the notarial actions is illiterate, a literate person who is capable of interpreting the notarial actions must attend and certify with his/her signature that the contents of the deal, application or other document is in the will of THE person with visual, hearing and speech impairment INVOLVED IN the deal, application and other document. The Civil Code and the Guidelines set out the principle of supportive decision-making in relation to persons with disabilities.

1. ***Mobility: Support for personal mobility and access to affordable and available quality mobility assistance (e.g., mobility aids, assistive technologies and products (prostheses, orthotics, wheelchairs), animal assistance, point-to-point and paratransit transport, among others);***

According to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan of December 18, 2020, No. 500 on the **"List of rehabilitation equipment provided to persons with disabilities at the expense of the state budget**", persons with disabilities are provided with assistive devices including high-tech prostheses and dental prostheses at the expense of the state budget. It should be noted that the number of assistive devices provided by the state has increased to 57 by adding 23 new assistive devices like electric wheelchair, high-tech prosthesis, lifts for wheelchair user and etc.

According to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers on approval of the “Rules for providing persons with disabilities with medicines, medical services and recreational treatment within the country” # 406 dated 23 December 2021, persons with disabilities are provided with medicines, medical services and recreational treatment at the expense of the state budget.

1. ***Assistance with daily living activities: Support to assist persons with disabilities in a one-to-one human relationship to perform daily life activities like getting up, bathing, dressing, grooming, going out, cooking, cleaning, guiding, shopping, or doing laundry (e.g., full or part time professional personal assistance, third person support allowance, informal personal assistance, household cleaner, among others);***

According to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the approval of **the rule for the provision of (mobile) social services at home**” No. 17 dated January 31, 2013, rehabilitation and social household services are provided to persons with disabilities. The following services are provided by social workers in accordance with this Resolution: providing assistance to persons with disabilities in cooking, cleaning, shopping, bathing, dressing and doing laundry etc.

At the same time, the **Presidential monthly benefit** to those who take care of person with disability established with 81-100 % impairment of body functions and children with disabilities under the age of 18 was establishedpursuant to the Presidential Decree of April 15, 2019.

1. ***Housing and accommodation: Support in relation to housing and living arrangements in the community, including home modifications (e.g., housing information and assistance, home support, supported living services, financial support for housing, among others);***

"**Regulations on reasonable accommodation of the infrastructure facilities for use of persons with disabilities**" approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 340 dated November 5, 2021, reasonable accommodation is carried out in order to make the necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, where needed in a particular case, and ensure that the persons with disabilities enjoy or exercise all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others. All central and local executive bodies, enterprises and organizations operating in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, regardless of their organizational - legal forms and a form of ownership should provide reasonable accommodation of subordinated road-transport, communication, information, cultural, household and other social infrastructure facilities for the use of persons with disabilities.

According to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan on "**Rule for control over consideration of the needs of persons with disabilities in the design and construction of infrastructure facilities and residential buildings, the implementation of reasonable accommodation of operating infrastructure facilities and residential buildings for the use of persons with disabilities**" No. 405 dated September 11, 2019, relevant state bodies take measures for ensuring accessibility of infrastructure and housing to persons with disabilities for a decent life in the place of residence, regardless of the type, form and level of severity of the disability, and creating the conditions for their full and effective participation in the society on an equal basis with others.

According to the **Executive Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan** "On a number of measures to improve the social and living conditions of persons with disabilities in connection with the protection of the territorial integrity, independence and constitutional order of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the families of martyrs" dated January 25, 2021, the state provides necessary support to persons with disabilities in connection with the Civil war and the families of martyrs and solves their household problems. They are provided with apartments, private houses and cars.

1. ***Family and household support: Support to families and households with members with disabilities (e.g., informal support for persons with disabilities, including care-related work leave and capacity building for informal care and support, community-based network and community mobilization programs, peer-support groups, localized intervention programs, circle of support, early childhood support, respite care, among others);***

Within the framework of the social service order, prevention of social loneliness of the following categories of children in difficult living conditions between the ages of 3 and 12 and minimizing the need for placing them in state children's institutions, at the same time social-psychological rehabilitation, habilitation, family support and it is planned to provide complex social services for family education. (Cavab Əlillik siyasəti şöbəsinin deyil)

The objectives of the social service order are as follows:

1. Provision of social rehabilitation services to 100 children with limited health opportunities.

2. Development of knowledge and skills of families in the field of integration of children with limited health capabilities into society.

**1 (b). What are** ***the government institutions, departments, and ministries in charge of budgeting, financing and implementing the above?***

* Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population (State Medical-Social Expertise and Rehabilitation Agency, the Agency for Sustainable and Operative Social Provision, Social Services Agency and other agencies included in the structure of the Ministry).
* Ministry of Finance
* Ministry of Justice

***1 (d). How are persons with disabilities and their representative organizations involved in the design and monitoring of the above (1(a))?***

The Public Council under the MLSPP was established to ensure the participation of civil society institutions in the organization of public control over the adoption of legal acts of the MLSPP and related to the directions of its activity. There are working groups on social services, integration and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities in the Public Council among the members of which are NGOs where persons with disabilities are represented.

***2 (a). Does your country have legislation or policies, at any level of government, regulating and coordinating a care and support system that considers the areas mentioned in 1 (a) above? Please provide references to the documentation.***

In connection with the implementation of the Presidential Decree No. 258 dated September 5, 2018 "On the expansion of use of electronic services in the fields of labor, employment, social protection and social security", an e-system was implemented in a number of fields, as well as in the field of disability assessment. Thus, an **"e-social"** internet portal has been created, where persons with disabilities are provided with opportunities to have access to their data, formed and stored in the Ministry's information resources and systems by entering to this portal, through "personal cabinet", to submit applications and requests to the relevant agencies of the Ministry, to access to all available electronic services.

In the year 2015, the Azerbaijani government launched an electronic disability assessment system using special software, called **“Disability Subsystem”.** The disability status of citizens is assessed electronically by the Medical-Social Expert Commissions through subsystem based on referrals from public health institutions without the presence of a person. Citizens are notified via SMS about the decision (duration and degree of disability or rejection). Citizens can also receive information about the results of the assessment freely and without interference, using the electronic service in the e-Government portal, the social registry portal “e-social” as well as using the interactive menu by calling the Call Centre 142-0. This system ensures that the disability assessment process is carried out objectively and transparently through the electronic infrastructure without official-citizen contacts. Subsystem is integrated to different information systems and databases, that ensures the accuracy and validity of information.

MLSPP made substantial changes to the disability assessment system for the first time and developed new **"Criteria for disability assessment"** in line with the best international practices. Best practices of Russia, Austria, Great Britain, the United States and Germany were studied, European Union's (EU) "Physical and mental disability rating scale", 10th edition of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and the International Classification of Functioning (ICF) were reviewed in the preparation of the new criteria for assessment of disability. According to the new criteria (enacted on 1 July 2022), disability will no longer be limited to three degrees, but will be assessed more comprehensively based on determining the percentage of loss of body functions and the degree of restriction of the 7 main categories of human life activities such as self-care, free movement, orientation, communication, behaviour control, learning and employment will be considered.

Thus, the current 3 degrees of disability will be evaluated as follows:

I degree - 81-100 % persistent impairments in the human body's function

II degree - 61-80 % persistent impairments in the human body's function,

III degree - 35-60 % persistent impairments in the human body's function.

In order to develop social model of rehabilitation, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population developed the “**Procedure for the development, approval and implementation of the Individual Rehabilitation Program**” that was approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 519 dated December 30, 2020. The Individual Rehabilitation Program includes a set of measures related to the medical, vocational, psychological and pedagogical rehabilitation and the development of social skills of a person with disability.

The **"Rehabilitation" Subsystem** has been established in the Centralized Electronic Information System of the MLSPP. The subsystem will facilitate the exchange of information in electronic form between the rehabilitation institutions of the Ministry and the Medical-Social Expert Commissions to establish activities related to them.

A Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan on approval of the **"Rules for maintaining the register of persons with disabilities**" was adopted on January 28, 2021. The electronic system created in accordance with the Rules is an information resource consisting of electronic documents or a set of documents (documented information) about persons with disabilities. Personal information about persons with disabilities in the register, date of disability, degree of disability, duration of disability, initial/recurrent disability, cause of disability, date of subsequent assessment of disability, percentage of disability, employment guarantee, diagnosis, driver's license, information on education, employment is reflected. The main purpose of creation the database on persons with disabilities is to record and analyze relevant information on disability, as well as to improve the quality of services in this area.

The Regulation for Applying the Quota for people with special needs for social protection and those facing difficulty with finding jobs" and "List of the Enterprises where the Quota is not applied” approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 213 dated November 22, 2005 were prepared in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 549 of August 9, 2001 "On the application of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Employment" to define the procedure for applying quotas in order to ensure employment of citizens with special needs and social difficulties.

In accordance with the Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan of December 2019, № 616 titled “**Procedure for financing of the wages of the insured**”, efforts are ongoing on the execution of the joint (the State Employment Service with employers) co-financing programme aimed to expand employment opportunities in order to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the labour market, help them acquire the necessary skills and experience.

**The Employment Strategy** of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019–2030, approved by Executive Order No. 602 of October 30, 2018, provides for the creation of appropriate infrastructure and the expansion of a network of vocational rehabilitation centres for provision of employment services for persons with disabilities.

***3. Does your country have a strategy to develop legislation, policies and programs to enable the development of support systems as described in 1 (a) above which includes targets, indicators and an accountability mechanism? Please provide references to the documentation.***

**The Strategic Plan** of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population for 2021-2025 approved by the Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Population of 21 January 2021, aims to identify the most important directions for planning and implementing of activities in the labour relations and social protection fields.

The Strategic Plan identifies key areas and priorities, as well as regulates the implementation mechanisms and timing, monitoring, reporting and evaluation planned to achieve the goals.

The Strategic Plan sets out the following priorities related to persons with disabilities to be pursued:

- Taking actions for improving rehabilitation services quality;

- Development and implementation of Individual Rehabilitation Plans;

- Improving accessibility of rehabilitation services for people with disabilities;

- Setting up a rehabilitation system based on a social model.

In addition, The EU-Azerbaijan Partnership, with financial assistance of the European Commission, has launched **a new project** on the modernization of rehabilitation system for persons with disabilities. Technical assistance provided by the EU on transforming rehabilitation service provision started from 2022. The goals of project are to prepare strategy paper on shifting from medical model of rehabilitation to social model, list of services to be provided in rehabilitation centres based on social rehabilitation model and best practices, service provision methods for implementation of social rehabilitation model, as well as proposals for a new organizational structure of these centres and training of staff.

***4. Please provide data on persons with disabilities and families and households accessing care and support systems as described above in 1 (a) and 2(a).***

Currently 15 rehabilitation centers, including 3 centers for the CWD, are operating under the MLSPP and 12 of them were reconstructed and renovated within the last 3 years. Centers located in the capital city Baku and in the regions of the country are equipped with specialized rehabilitation equipment. Rehabilitation services for the PWD and CWD are provided based on the state financed programs and totally exclude out-of-pocket payments. In accordance with the modern requirements rehabilitation services are delivered based on the biopsychosocial approach according to individual rehabilitation and habilitation program for PWD and CWD and approved by the regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 2020.

 Table1. Information about rehabilitation centers

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| N | Name | Number of beds | Service provided | Population served |
| 1 | Shagan Rehabilitation Pension | 250 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Adults |
| 2 | Mardakan Rehabilitation Pension | 150 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Adults |
| 3 | Baku Rehabilitation Centre | 60 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Adults |
| 4 | Republican Rehabilitation Centre | 50 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Adults |
| 5 | Children Rehabilitation Centre N1 | 50 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Children under 18 |
| 6 | Children Rehabilitation Centre N2 | N/A | Outpatient | Children under 18 |
| 7 | Sumgayit Rehabilitation Centre | 20 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Adults |
| 8 | Khachmaz Rehabilitation Centre | 14 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Adults |
| 9 | Yevlakh Rehabilitation Centre | 14 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Adults |
| 10 | Shaki Rehabilitation Centre | 14 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Adults |
| 11 | Shirvan Rehabilitation Centre | 14 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Adults |
| 12 | Lankaran Rehabilitation Centre | 14 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Adults |
| 13 | Naftalan Rehabilitation Centre | 25 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Adults |
| 14 | Gabala Children Rehabilitation Centre | 25 | Inpatient and Outpatient | Children under 18 |
| 15 | Prosthetics and Orthopedics Production and Rehabilitation Centre | N/A | Production | Adults and Children under 18 |

Access to rehabilitation is going through reservation system where PWD can choose Rehabilitation Center and dates to apply, PWD is informed by notification about the exact date when they will be admitted to the Center.

Admission and registration of patients is going through the special Rehabilitation electronical subsystems (Health Information System) which is a centralized source of information and gives opportunity to have access to the patient data and ensures providing coordinated care among practitioners.

Types of services provided:

1. Medical Rehabilitation

* Exercise therapy.
* Physiotherapy.
* Hydrotherapy.
* Massage.
1. Psycho-Social Rehabilitation
* Psychodiagnostics.
* Psychotherapy.
* Speech therapy
* Ergotherapy.

In order to increase number of PWDs involved in service, online services are being used. Physiotherapists, psychologist, and speech therapists of rehab centers provide online exercise therapy and psychological sessions to the PWDs and CWDs, thus ensuring consistent and sustainable delivery of services.

During the 6 months of the current 2022 year 19278 people with disabilities has been received rehabilitation services in the mentioned rehabilitation centers. Services are provided in an inpatient, outpatient, online, mobile, and community-based rehabilitation types.

In addition to that starting from April 2022 “Rehabilitation Bus” (Rehabus) service has been launched for people with disabilities. The main goal of the Rehabus service is to deliver PWDs and CWDs from the place of their residence directly to the rehabilitation center. This in turn ensures more accessible and sustainable rehabilitation and serves for the increased patient satisfaction. Currently 33 PWDs are covered with the Rehabus service.

Furthermore, in June 2022 hippotherapy service for children with disabilities was launched. The purpose of this service is to provide psycho-social and medical rehabilitation to the CWDs. Currently the hippotherapy service is delivered to 27 CWDs.

***5. Please provide date on the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the persons with disabilities and families and households with disabilities (death rates disaggregated by disabilities status, death rates in institutions compared to those living in community, impact on income as a consequence of disruption in support or increased support and care demands, disruption in support services, among other).***

During the strict quarantine regime due to the COVID-19 pandemic, admission of persons with disabilities to rehabilitation centres was limited and there were difficulties in assessing disability and providing assistive devices. To address these issues, some services were provided remotely online. The Prosthetic-Orthopaedic Production and Rehabilitation Centre of the MLSPP provided mobile services (provision of assistive devices for persons with disabilities at their place of residence) and online psychological assistance to persons with disabilities.

According to the Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan of April 7, 2020, No. 218 "On extension of term of disability of persons with disabilities in fight against the new pandemic of coronavirus (COVID-19)" Azerbaijan Government extended the period of disability of persons whose disability period had expired, and they continued receiving monthly disability benefits or pensions. Banks extended the duration of bank cards and payment of disability benefits and pensions continued through all the period.

During the special quarantine period, the education of students with disabilities was organized remotely and in special boarding schools through the special web platform, and the rules of conduct in schools were determined during the COVID-19 pandemic. To protect against the COVID-19 virus, information boards on prevention and precautionary measures, as well as proper social behavior rules prepared for students by the Ministry of Education were provided for all educational institutions.

During Covid 19 pandemic, large-scale employment and social welfare measures were taken. One of these measures was aimed at protecting jobs during that period. Thus, the number of people whose jobs were retained and whose income was protected equaled to 1,665,000, and 751.3 thousand in the private sector. In addition, as a measure of social support during the pandemic, a one-time payment program in the amount of the subsistence minimum was implemented in cities and regions where a strict quarantine regime was applied. Sustainable social payments (pensions, benefits and allowances) continued. Paid public works were organized and their number reached 90,000.