

## How to improve knowledge of disability issues by the general public and to develop accessibility and mobility of people with disabilities?

**Relevant articles of the CRPD:** 8, 9, 19, 20, 26

**Country:** Macedonia

**Region:** South East Europe

**Languages available:** English (full report available in Albanian)

### *Large-scale Awareness-Raising in Macedonia*

## Description of the practice and the process involved

Polio Plus from Skopje carried out a successful awareness raising campaign in 2003 called “A Parking Space Named Desire”. The two key objectives were to **uphold and promote mobility and access of people with disabilities to the built environment** as a human right as well as to **facilitate civic education aimed at engendering a spirit of collective responsibility** for these rights.

The “A Parking Space Named Desire” initiative was broken into three parts:

### 1. Lobbying for stronger legislation

Polio Plus recognised that in order for designated parking spaces for people with disabilities to be available and respected, there needs to be **stronger legislation with a mechanism for implementation and better punitive tools for non-compliance**.

Thus, they focused part of the initiative on **a comparative analysis of legislation** prevailing in the EU with the relevant legislation in Macedonia and **used the results to draft amendments**.

Once the analysis was finished, **a legally based advisory committee lobbied appropriate bodies and entities** on the proposed amendment. The targeted bodies included: the legal departments of relevant line ministries, the Traffic Department within the Ministry of Interior and the Council for Traffic Security which is a part of parliament and is responsible for promoting policy in this area.

In addition to this, **lobbying was carried out for dedicated parking spaces in four areas encompassing 7 cities**: Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar, Prilep and surrounding area, Bitola, Ohrid and Struga.

## **2. Training of the civic sector**

A **training seminar** was held for members of the police force in cooperation with the Traffic Department of the Ministry of Interior to **raise their awareness on the importance of respecting these dedicated parking spaces** by the wider population. One of the lecturers was **a policeman who acquired a disability** during the recent near-Civil War, and another the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture in Skopje.

Going a step further, **a civic patrol** was also established to complement the work of the police force, in accordance with the provisions set out in the Law on Traffic Safety. The role of the civic patrol in this project was **to assist the police in implementing the new changes in the law and by-laws**.

The police force and the civic patrol were to **be assisted by a youth brigade**. This brigade was composed of **young volunteers**, both **with and without disabilities**. It assisted in **marking out parking spaces**, in **monitoring that they are respected by the public** and in **handing out informative flyers**.

## **3. Public awareness-raising**

The official awareness raising campaign was launched with **a press conference** in which Polio Plus announced the **opening of a competition for the most effective municipality to mark and protect dedicated parking spaces** offering a prize to the most successful community.

For the purpose of taking the most advantage of this competition, the Polio Plus secured an **agreement of co-operation with the dean of the faculty of architecture** of Skopje. The dean provided **guidelines in marking out parking spaces according to international standards** and appointed one of his staff to serve as a point of consultation for municipalities on the subject.

The core of the youth brigade was based in Skopje but its members travelled around the country, **working together with peer members from local communities** as a team in marking out parking spaces. **Team Leaders were assigned to each of the 4 key areas** in order to generate **team spirit** amongst volunteers and to undertake **lobbying activities** in relevant municipalities. In total, **300 parking spaces were marked during the initiative**, of which **only 100 dedicated** parking spaces were funded **with the project's budget** while the remaining 200 were financed by the **business sector within each community**.

Once the parking spaces were marked, in the following three months, the Youth Brigade **monitored compliance and issued warnings and fines to people who violated the law**. During the monitoring phase, **stickers and flyers on the free mobility of people with disabilities** were handed out to the public.

As part of the awareness raising campaign, **flyers, posters, billboards, a radio spot, TV clip and a short documentary** were produced and disseminated. The TV spot highlighted the difficulties encountered by people with disabilities in finding parking spaces and the **British government** through the British embassy funded it. **A supporting radio spot** was also produced using the **slogan and motif of the project**. A short documentary was used as **a learning tool in the seminar given to police**. An important element of the media campaign was to **liaise with the media**. As one of the outcomes, **the established media relations will help to regularly "feed"**

**both press releases and related anecdotes to members of the press**, keeping the general public informed and maintaining their interest in disability issues.

Finally, the **second press conference** was held at the end of the project presenting **the successes of the initiative** as well as **delivering awards to the most successful municipality** and showing **video footage from the project itself**.



Campaign poster for a Parking Space Named Desire

Polio Plus carried out another awareness raising campaign called **“Unequal Treatment is Equal to Illegal Treatment”** in which they placed **wheelchairs outside of the Law Faculty, the Centre for Employment and the Centre for Social Security - all inaccessible public buildings**. After carrying out the demonstrations, Polio Plus put **stickers indicating whether a building was accessible or not on businesses and public buildings** working directly with those **that expressed a strong interest in making their building accessible** by providing them with **guidelines** for installing the ramps. In total, **85 ramps were built as a direct result of the protest**. Some 30 more are currently **under construction** and there are **promises of a further 40** to be built in the near future.

## Background and context

**Full project report:** [Free Movement of People with Disabilities in South East Europe: An inaccessible right?](#) (DMI SEE, 2006)

**Criteria for the good practices:** see page 23 of the full report.

**Recommendations from the good practices:** see pages 91 – 93 of the full report



### Links to further resources:

[Full text on article 8 – Awareness-raising](#)

[Full text on article 9 – Accessibility](#)

[Full text on article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community](#)

[Full text on article 20 – Personal mobility](#)

[Full text on article 26 – Habilitation and rehabilitation](#)