



**Convention on the Rights
of Persons with Disabilities**

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**Initial report submitted by Belarus under article
35 of the Convention, due in 2018*, ****

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Introduction

1. The Republic of Belarus ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in December 2016.
2. This report is being submitted in accordance with article 35 (1) of the Convention and was prepared in accordance with the guidelines (CRPD/C/2/3) drafted by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
3. This report is the initial report of Belarus on the measures taken to implement its obligations under the Convention and the progress achieved as a result.
4. The report covers the period 2017–2018 and contains information on key legislative, judicial, administrative, practical and other measures taken during the reporting period that are of direct relevance to the provisions of the Convention.
5. The preparation process for this report involved consultations and discussions with representatives of the country's civil society associations of persons with disabilities.
6. The report was prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in cooperation with government agencies and organizations responsible for the observance and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, the Supreme Court, the National Statistical Committee and the Central Commission on Elections and National Referendums.
7. Detailed information on how Belarus is upholding specific categories of human rights is given in periodic reports submitted to other human rights treaty bodies and universal periodic review documents:
 - Common core document (HRI/CORE/BLR/2015)
 - National report submitted for the universal periodic review (A/HRC/WG.6/22/BLR/1)
 - Fifth periodic report on the measures taken to give effect to the rights recognized in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR/C/BLR/5)
 - Combined fourth to sixth periodic reports on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/BLR/4-6)
 - Fifth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT/C/BLR/5)
 - Combined twentieth to twenty-third periodic reports on the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD/C/BLR/20-23)
 - Combined third and fourth periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/BLR/3-4)
 - Eighth report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/BLR/8)

Part I. General information

Land and people

8. The territory of Belarus covers 207,600 km².
9. At the start of 2018, the population of Belarus was 9.5 million, of whom 5.1 million (53.4 per cent) were female and 4.4 million (46.6 per cent) were male. The breakdown by age group was: children (age 0–15): 1.6 million (male: 0.8 million, female: 0.8 million); age 15–65: 6.5 million (female: 3.4 million, male: 3.1 million); age 65 and older: 1.4 million (female: 0.9 million, male: 0.5 million).
10. The population density stands at 45.7 persons per km². The urban population is 7.4 million (78.1 per cent) and the rural population is 2.1 million (21.9 per cent).

11. The population includes more than 100 different ethnic groups, represented in the following proportions: 83.7 per cent Belarusians; 8.3 per cent Russians; 3.1 per cent Poles; 1.7 per cent Ukrainians; 0.1 per cent Jews; and 3.1 per cent others (2009 census).

12. The population of Belarus is 84 per cent Orthodox, 8.5 per cent Catholic and 2.5 per cent other religions.

13. The Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and religion. Everyone has the right to determine his or her attitude to religion, to profess any religion, individually or with others, or to profess no religion, to express and disseminate his or her religious beliefs and to take part in religious worship, ceremonies and rites not prohibited by law.

14. The relationship between the State and religious organizations is regulated by law, with consideration for their influence on the formation of the spiritual, cultural and national traditions of the Belarusian people.

Political structure

15. Belarus is a unitary State with a presidential system of government.

16. The government exercises power on the basis of the Constitution and other laws and is divided into legislative, executive and judicial branches. The public authorities have separate powers: they work together and act as mutual checks and balances.

17. Legislative power is vested in a bicameral parliament called the National Assembly of Belarus. The lower house is called the House of Representatives and the upper house the Council of the Republic. A parliamentary term of office lasts four years. The House of Representatives has 110 members, who are elected on a constituency basis to represent the interests of citizens. The Council of the Republic represents the different territories of the country. The provinces and the city of Minsk each elect 8 members to the Council – totalling 56 representatives – by secret ballot at meetings of the local councils of deputies of the relevant territorial units and 8 members of the Council of the Republic are appointed by the President.

18. The President, the members of the House of Representatives, the Council of the Republic, the Government and groups of eligible voters at least 50,000 in number all have the right to propose legislation, which is exercised through the House of Representatives.

19. Executive power is exercised by the country's Government, the Council of Ministers, which is the central organ of State administration. The Prime Minister is the Head of Government. In its work, the Government reports to the President and is accountable to the parliament.

20. Judicial power is vested in the courts (Constitution, art. 109). The Supreme Court is the highest judicial authority and administers justice in civil, criminal, administrative and economic cases. It also supervises the judicial activity of the ordinary courts and exercises other powers in accordance with the law (Code of the Judicial System and the Status of Judges, art. 51). The Constitutional Court monitors the constitutionality of the country's laws and regulations.

21. Local government and self-government are exercised through local executive and administrative bodies, self-governing bodies, referendums, assemblies and other forms of public participation.

Administrative structure

22. The territorial breakdown of administration in the country includes 6 provinces, the capital, a city of national status, 118 districts, 10 towns under provincial jurisdiction, 104 towns under district jurisdiction, 86 urban settlements and 1,156 villages.

23. The capital of Belarus is Minsk, with a population of more than 1,980,000.

24. The official languages of Belarus are Belarusian and Russian.

Socioeconomic development

25. 2017 saw a transition to economic recovery. In 2017, the gross domestic product (GDP) in constant prices reached 102.4 per cent.
26. A reduction in the consumer price index is another positive trend; for January–December 2017, the level was 106.0 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year.
27. Belarus is second in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for floor space per occupant (26.8 m² per occupant in 2016).
28. In 2017, 102,600 babies were born, which is 5,500 fewer than in 2010. However, the decreased mortality rate is a positive demographic factor. The number of deaths in 2017 was 119,300, which is 17,800 fewer than in 2010. The natural population decrease fell from 29,100 in 2010 to 16,700 in 2017.
29. Belarus has committed to rapid digitization. The country has risen in the global rating of the International Telecommunication Union, the Information and Communications Technology Development Index, from fiftieth position in 2010 to thirty-second in 2017, ahead of all the other CIS countries.
30. Belarus is also one of the world's leading exporters of computer and information services per capita. In 2017, exports of such services amounted to US\$ 128 per person, up from US\$ 23.50 in 2010 and several times higher than the equivalent indicators for the Russian Federation and Ukraine.
31. Belarus has an open economy. In 2017, the country's foreign trade turnover was more than 1.5 times higher than GDP and the value of its exports of goods and services was 67 per cent of GDP.
32. The country's rating within the region for the use of electronic media and information and communications technology has improved according to a number of measures. For example, in 2017, Belarus significantly improved its position in the ease of doing business ranking, which appears in the *Doing Business* report of the World Bank, moving from 129th to 37th position. It was cited as one of the 10 countries that made the biggest improvements to its business regulations.
33. Belarus achieved the most important Millennium Development Goal, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, ahead of time. In 2017, only 5.9 per cent of Belarusian citizens were officially living in poverty, which is just half of the average figure for Eastern European countries.
34. In 2013, the United Nations acknowledged that Belarus had achieved the Millennium Development Goals to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis (Goals 4, 5 and 6). In 2016, the country received a certificate from the World Health Organization (WHO) establishing its elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.
35. In 2015, Belarus was one of the 193 States to endorse the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and has demonstrated significant support for its realization through achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals.
36. Belarus considers the 2030 Agenda to be a unique foundation for a new global policy on sustainable development, which will ensure real progress, including in the fulfilment of the rights of persons with disabilities and the creation of an accessible environment for them.
37. In 2017, a national coordination mechanism for implementation of the 2030 Agenda was established, called the Council for Sustainable Development and headed by the National Coordinator for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Belarus submitted its first national report on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in July 2017.
38. Belarus is currently reviewing its 2030 development strategy to produce a new sustainable development strategy for the period up to 2035. This process, along with the steps already taken by the State, have given Belarus a solid foundation for progress in implementation of its Sustainable Development Goals road map.

39. In order to fulfil a key principle of the 2030 Agenda, leaving no one behind, and also in accordance with article 29 of the Convention, persons with disabilities in Belarus participate in the process of drafting and making decisions on issues that affect society in general. For example, Evgeny Shevko, the chair of the Republican Association of Wheelchair Users, is a member of the Council on Sustainable Development partners' group and Vladimir Potapenko, the chair of the Belarusian Society of Persons with Disabilities, is a member of the Coordinating Council on International Technical Cooperation attached to the Commission on International Technical Cooperation under the Council of Ministers.

Employment

40. The number of people employed in the Belarusian economy in 2017 was 4,350,000. Among employed persons, 54.6 per cent have higher and specialized secondary education, while 28.6 per cent have vocational and technical education.

41. The recorded level of unemployment at the end of December 2017 was down 0.3 percentage points compared to 2016 and accounted for 0.5 per cent of the workforce. The real unemployment level (according to International Labour Organization (ILO) methodology) in 2017 was 5.6 per cent of the workforce.

42. In Belarus, issues related to employment are resolved through the implementation of subprogramme 1, on employment promotion, of the State Programme on Social Protection and Employment Promotion for 2016–2020.

Standard of living

43. In 2017, the share of the population with incomes lower than the subsistence level (poverty line) was 5.9 per cent (7.7 per cent in 2007).

44. Since 2010, the subsistence level for a four-person family has been increasing faster than the consumer price index. Over this period, it has increased by 1.1 times, to reach the dollar equivalent of US\$ 99.50.

45. Measures to raise the standard of living have been given special attention in the country. The result has been a steady increase in wages, the prompt and full payment of pensions, the reinforcement of targeted social assistance and the development of innovative technologies in social services. The growth in real disposable incomes was 102.8 per cent higher in 2017 compared to 2016 and real wages 106.2 per cent.

46. Belarus is fifty-third in the human development index ranking according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report 2018*, putting the country in the high human development category.

Social protection

47. In Belarus, citizens are guaranteed a minimum wage and pension and old age, illness, disability, survivor and other social security benefits. Voluntary social insurance, the establishment of additional forms of social welfare and charity are all encouraged.

48. Belarus implements a targeted policy to ensure the financial sustainability of the pension system and real pension growth.

49. The country now has an extensive system of State social support for various categories of persons in need of such support, including veterans, persons with disabilities and older persons living alone. Significant efforts are made to help maintain the standard of living for persons in these categories, resolve their day-to-day problems and provide psychosocial and medical rehabilitation.

50. Since 2001, a system of targeted social assistance from the State has been in place to maintain the incomes of the poorest families and individuals by providing them with temporary material support and help them overcome their difficult circumstances. In 2017, more than 300,000 persons received targeted social assistance.

51. In 2004, the government standard of one social services centre per administrative district was established. There are currently 148 local social services centres operating across the country.

52. Local authorities are actively adopting modern technologies for social work with persons with disabilities. Social innovations such as the home care, respite care, social services based on life estate agreements, assisted living services in residential homes and fostering have proved useful. In 2017, a new form of social services, substitute family care, was introduced by law to provide social services to persons with disabilities living with people other than their relatives.

53. Government social-sector procurement has been recently adopted as a mechanism for involving companies and sole traders in the provision of social services and the implementation of projects to help persons living in difficult circumstances.

54. Another focus for the Government's efforts is the provision of social support to persons with disabilities, particularly measures to create an accessible environment for persons with disabilities and older persons under the State Programme on Social Protection and Employment Promotion for 2016–2020.

55. One approach established in national legislation is the provision of disability pensions. This has led to pension coverage for all the persons with disabilities in the country.

56. Persons recognized as persons with disabilities are paid an employment pension (if they have an employment history and have made compulsory insurance contributions) or a social pension (if they do not receive an employment pension).

Health care

57. Public spending on development of the health system has increased almost tenfold over the past 10 years and, in 2017, amounted to 6 per cent of GDP.

58. The public health-care sector encompasses 612 hospitals, 845 outpatient clinics and 418 outpatient departments within hospitals and maternity clinics. The treatment facilities have 95,600 beds. In 2017 there were 40,100 doctors and 101,300 paramedical workers.

59. Modern medical centres have been established, introducing new technologies and types of treatment for common illnesses. The national clinics are successfully disseminating best practices in the provision of high-technology health-care services to the regions. The number of transplants carried out has continued to grow. In 2017, a total of 79 liver transplants, 352 kidney transplants, 6 kidney-pancreas transplants, 39 heart transplants and 5 lung transplants were carried out across the country, including in the regions (Brest, Hrodna, Viciebsk and Mahilioŭ provinces).

60. A draft national strategy to improve child and adolescent health, based on the WHO strategy and incorporating the assessments of WHO international experts and their recommendations, has been developed and agreed upon with stakeholders. The purpose of developing the national strategy is to establish safe (optimal/favourable) conditions for children to enjoy the best possible health throughout their life cycle and to reduce the burden of preventable illness and mortality, not only in childhood and adolescence but in adult life.

61. Under the government programme Health and Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2016–2020, the Ministry of Health has continued to implement measures to organize and conduct screening for different types of cancer (breast cancer, prostate cancer, colorectal cancer and cervical cancer). The organization of screening is one of the priority areas in combating non-infectious disease, protecting health and saving lives.

62. Development of the health system has helped increase life expectancy in the country to 74.4 years. The death rate is 12.6 per 1,000, the maternal mortality rate is 2 per 100,000 live births and the infant mortality rate is 3.2 per 1,000. Among persons of working age recognized for the first time as persons with disabilities, those with the highest degrees of disability make up 50 per cent (as had been expected).

Education

63. Annual public spending on education in Belarus is approximately 5 per cent of GDP.

64. According to UNDP data, Belarus is a country with a high level of human capital. Adult literacy stands at 99.7 per cent. The mean length of schooling is 12 years. On this indicator, Belarus comes twelfth of 177 countries (2016).

65. The coverage of primary, general secondary and vocational education in the working population is 98 per cent. Secondary education coverage in 2016 stood at 103 per cent (+0.1 per cent compared to 2015).

66. Internet access is provided in 99.8 per cent of educational establishments.

67. In 2016, there were 431 organizations engaged in scientific research and development. The percentage of shipped output accounted for by innovative products is 16.3. There are 5,090 postgraduate and 432 doctoral students.

68. As part of the government programme Education and Youth Policy for 2016–2020, currently being implemented in Belarus, measures will be undertaken at all educational levels.

69. The focus of the education system in Belarus is to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

General framework for the protection and promotion of human rights

70. Belarus is a unitary democratic social State governed by the rule of law. Human beings, their rights and freedoms and guarantees of the enjoyment of those rights and freedoms are the highest value and aim of society and the State (Constitution, arts. 1 and 2).

71. The legal status of the individual enshrined in the Constitution is based on the concept of human and civil rights and freedoms and derives from the fundamental provisions of international legal instruments. The Constitution has incorporated the main ideas and provisions of international human rights instruments and given effect to them while taking account of national conditions.

72. Belarus has been a member of ILO since 1954. It has ratified 49 ILO conventions (with 42 in force), including all 8 of the fundamental conventions. Acknowledging that generally recognized principles of international law must prevail, Belarus ensures that its legislation is compatible with the ILO conventions it has ratified. The resulting provisions are applicable to all citizens without discrimination.

73. Belarus recognizes the precedence of the generally recognized principles of international law and ensures that its legislation is consistent with them. The rules of law contained in the international treaties to which Belarus is a party form part of domestic legislation, are directly applicable, except where it is specified in an international treaty that such application requires the adoption (promulgation) of a domestic legal act, and are supported by the legal act whereby Belarus expresses its consent to be bound by the international treaty concerned (Constitution, art. 7, Laws and Regulations of the Republic of Belarus Act, art. 20, and the International Agreements Act, art. 33 (2)).

74. In its 26 years of independence, Belarus has demonstrated its commitment to observing human rights and fundamental freedoms.

75. Belarus has a well-developed system of specialized bodies bringing together the State and civil society to protect and promote various categories of human rights:

- National Interdepartmental Council on Disability
- National Council on Gender Policy under the Council of Ministers
- National Commission on the Rights of the Child
- National Council on Labour and Social Affairs
- Inter-Ethnic Advisory Council

- Interfaith Advisory Council
- Interdepartmental Commission on Older Persons, Veterans and Victims of War, established under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
- Interdepartmental Council on Foreign Students
- Council for the Development of Social and Labour Legislation
- Public Coordinating Council on the Mass Media
- Public Coordinating Council on the Environment
- Public Council on Fighting Corruption
- Public Council of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, etc.
- These bodies include representatives of civil society, which plays a meaningful role in carrying out independent monitoring.

Part II. Information on implementation of the Convention

Article 1

Purpose

76. The aim of public policy on the social protection of persons with disabilities is reflected in the Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act¹ and is focused on ensuring full participation in public life for persons with disabilities.

77. The purpose of government policy in the field of social protection of persons with disabilities in Belarus is in line with the purpose of the Convention, as set out in article 1.

78. The fulfilment of rights and freedoms for the citizens of Belarus is the highest purpose of the State, which ensures liberty, security of person and individual dignity (Constitution, arts. 21 and 25).

79. All citizens of Belarus, including persons with disabilities, are guaranteed equal human and civil rights and freedoms. All persons are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection, without discrimination, of their rights and legitimate interests (Constitution, art. 22).

80. The concept of “person with a disability” is established in the Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act. A person with a disability is a person with “long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers hinders his or her full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (art.1). This definition is in line with the definition of persons with disabilities set out in the Convention.

Article 2

Definitions

81. In the legislation of Belarus, the enforcement of the provisions on matters related to disability is based on definitions and terms corresponding to article 2 of the Convention.

82. Every citizen of Belarus has the right to free choice of language for communication, child-rearing and education (Constitution, art. 50).

83. The term “communication” (Convention, art. 2 (1)) is covered in articles 11 and 12 of the Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act, which stipulates that sign language is used for communication with persons with hearing impairments. Sign language is recognized by the State as a means of interpersonal communication. Government support for sign language involves the preservation and development of sign language; the

¹ mintrud.gov.by.

inclusion of sign language in the curricula of educational establishments providing professional development and retraining for specialists in labour, employment and social welfare agencies, the emergency services, law enforcement and other government bodies; the organization of sign language interpreting; and the provision of free sign language interpreting services.

84. The State guarantees the right of persons with hearing impairments to receive information through broadcast media by ensuring the broadcast of television programmes with subtitles or sign language interpretation (Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act, art. 13).

85. For persons with hearing impairments, teaching and education is provided in Belarusian or Russian (spoken, written and using fingerspelling) and sign language with the use of group and personal sound amplifiers and assistive technology to convey educational materials and other information visually. In establishments offering vocational and technical, specialized secondary and higher education, persons with hearing impairments are taught using sign language. Furthermore, educational establishments are to provide the conditions necessary for sign language interpretation (Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act, art. 17).

86. Persons with visual impairments are taught to use assistive technology and special equipment. Education for blind persons is provided using the Braille system, while partially sighted persons are issued with large print textbooks (Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act, art. 18).

87. The development of principles for plain language to be used by persons with intellectual disabilities as a means of communication is planned under the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for 2017–2025.²

88. A bill on amendments to laws concerning the social protection of persons with disabilities (for the purpose of implementing the Convention) will include the concepts of “reasonable accommodation” and “universal design” and will stipulate that the aims of public policy on the rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion in Belarus are to include the provision of an accessible living environment on the basis of universal design and reasonable accommodation.

89. The term “universal design” as it is used in the Convention appears in the policy outline on universal design in the creation of a barrier-free environment, approved by Ministry of Architecture and Construction Order No. 252 of 3 November 2016, the objectives of which are to design products and environments that are usable by everyone, without the need for adaptation, considering the requirements of persons with different disabilities (mobility, sensory and cognitive).

Article 3

General principles

90. Belarus places the highest value on human beings and their lives, rights and freedoms. Human rights and freedoms are guaranteed by the Constitution. Human dignity is sacrosanct. Torture, violence and other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment are prohibited. Everyone has the right to defend his or her rights and freedoms by all lawful means (Constitution, arts. 1, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26).

91. The principles of Belarus in the area of social protection for persons with disabilities are: respect for human rights; prohibition of discrimination based on disability; accessible medical, social, professional and vocational rehabilitation; rights for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others to health care, education and a free choice of occupation; cooperation of public authorities with civil society associations of persons with disabilities (Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act, art. 4).

92. Persons with disabilities in Belarus have all the political, socioeconomic and individual rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution and other legislation as well as

² mintrud.gov.by.

the inalienable right to respect for their human dignity. The rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of persons with disabilities are protected through judicial and other proceedings in the manner prescribed by law. Equality before the law, as proclaimed in article 22 of the Constitution, means equal rights for all citizens irrespective of their origin, social status, wealth, race, ethnic background, sex, education, language, attitude towards religion, type and nature of occupation, place of residence or other circumstances. Civil legislation includes the concepts of “civil legal capacity” (the capacity to possess civil-law rights and bear responsibilities) and “civil dispositive capacity” (the capacity of a citizen, by his or her actions, to acquire and exercise civil-law rights, to create civil-law responsibilities for himself or herself and to perform them). Legal capacity begins with a person’s birth and ends with his or her death.

93. Persons with disabilities have the right to: social protection, including rehabilitation and inclusion; access to social infrastructure facilities; access to information; education and a free choice of occupation, including employment; a guaranteed level of free health care in accordance with the law; vocational training and retraining, vocational rehabilitation and employment; and housing in accordance with housing legislation (Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act, arts. 4, 9, 10, 14, 19, 20, 24 and 32).

94. The principle of “non-discrimination” (Convention, art. 3 (b)) is one of the tenets underpinning Belarusian legislation on the protection of human rights (Constitution, art. 22).

95. The principle of “inclusion in society” (Convention, art. 3 (c)) is applied in practice through a system of measures guaranteed by the Government for the social protection of persons with disabilities and for ensuring their equality and full participation in society (Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act, preamble).

96. The inclusion of persons with disabilities in society has been set as a priority for government policy in the area of social protection for persons with disabilities (Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act, art. 4). In order to achieve full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society, concrete legal provisions and a number of practical and regulatory measures have been introduced to eliminate any physical or communication barriers that might prevent their inclusion in society (Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act).

97. The principle of “equality of opportunity” (Convention, art. 3 (e)) is enshrined in national law. Persons with disabilities are guaranteed the opportunity to fulfil their potential on an equal basis with others in many different aspects of social life (health, education, employment, culture, fitness and sport, transport, communications, services and the justice system, etc.) through legislative acts governing those areas.

98. The principle of “accessibility” (Convention, art. 3 (f)) is one of the fundamental principles of social protection for persons with disabilities (Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act, arts. 24–30).

99. To ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities, Belarus takes measures to identify and eliminate obstacles (barriers) that interfere or may interfere with unimpeded access on an equal basis with others (non-compliance with the standards in force for the construction of new community facilities and social housing, etc.) to the physical environment, transport, information and communications, including information and communication technologies and systems and other facilities and services.

100. The principle of “equality between men and women” (Convention, art. 3 (g)) is regarded as the equality of all citizens without discrimination and is enshrined in the Constitution (art. 22).

101. In accordance with the principles and standards of international law and international treaties, women in Belarus are guaranteed equal opportunities to men in education and professional training, employment and promotion, sociopolitical, cultural and other areas of activity and the creation of conditions to ensure their health and safety at work (Constitution, art. 32).

102. In 1981, Belarus acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In 2003, it ratified the Optional Protocol to that Convention.

103. The principle of “respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities” (Convention, art. 3 (h)) is reflected in national law.

104. Government policy in Belarus is aimed at ensuring the proper physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development of children in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and international obligations.

105. In Belarus, a socially oriented public policy is implemented for the education of persons with special physical or psychological needs. Special education today is regarded as an integral part of the general education system, which is divided into two levels of basic education – preschool and general primary/secondary education (Education Code, art. 14).

106. The opportunity to receive education is given to all children, regardless of the nature and extent of their impairments (Education Code, art. 3).

107. The State guarantees children with disabilities and children with special physical or psychological needs the following: free educational, medical, social and psychological assistance; the choice of education establishment by them or their parents (tutors or guardians); special educational conditions for children with special physical or psychological needs, along with remedial interventions; help in finding work in line with their abilities; social rehabilitation; a productive life in conditions that respect their dignity and help them to play an active part in society; and health care (Rights of the Child Act, arts. 31 and 36).

Article 4

General obligations

108. The provisions of the Convention apply to all administrative divisions of the country without any limitation or exception.

109. In order to ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities, in 2007 the Government launched its work in three priority areas: establishing accessible social and transport infrastructure; promoting employment; and encouraging positive social attitudes towards persons with disabilities.

110. Belarus has the prerequisites and the capacity to implement the provisions of the Convention, but there are areas in which it still needs to carry out significant work before the aims and requirements of current legislation can be considered to have been fulfilled. This includes the obligations contained in articles 8 and 9 of the Convention related to improving accessibility, article 27 regarding work and employment and the part of article 24 that relates to ensuring inclusive education.

111. The Interdepartmental Personalized Information System on Persons with Disabilities, which contains information on persons with disabilities and facilitates individualized monitoring of the fulfilment of their rights to social protection, has been established and is now operating.

112. As at 1 August 2018, the proportion of persons with disabilities in the records of the labour, employment and social welfare authorities was 6 per cent of the total population or 567,500 persons.

113. Of the total number of persons with disabilities, 254,500 (45.1 per cent) are male and 310,400 (54.9 per cent) are female; by age group, 5.5 per cent are children, 62.8 per cent are of working age and 25.0 per cent are older persons; 55.2 per cent live in urban areas and 44.8 per cent live in rural areas.

114. Work to uphold the standards and provisions of the Convention in the country is organized through the national action plan for 2017–2025, approved by the Government.

115. The measures in the national action plan are aimed at harmonizing national law and mechanisms for the integration of persons with disabilities into society with the principles and standards of the Convention, ensuring and promoting the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities without any discrimination on the basis of disability, including the provision of an accessible environment for persons

with disabilities and the protection of their rights, and fostering positive public attitudes towards disability issues.

116. Belarus has been making consistent efforts to improve national legislation, including work carried out in 2018 to draft a bill on amendments to laws concerning the social protection of persons with disabilities, with a view to bringing them into line with the Convention and promoting the fullest possible inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.

117. One of the main factors in achieving the objectives set is the fact that the Government of Belarus is in constant dialogue with civil society, which is extremely important for policymaking and plays a significant role in the identification and resolution of issues.

118. Systematic efforts have been made to involve organizations of persons with disabilities in the drafting process for laws, regulations and policies containing provisions that affect the interests of persons with disabilities.

119. Joint work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is carried out within consultative and advisory bodies such as the National Interdepartmental Council on Disability of the Government of Belarus and standing commissions of local executive authorities.

120. NGO social projects enjoy State support under the Social Services Act through the organization of government social-sector procurement, which involves paying subsidies to non-profit organizations for providing social services and carrying out social projects. Organizations of persons with disabilities account for 30 per cent of the service providers for government social-sector procurement.

Article 5

Equality and non-discrimination

121. National law does not contain any provisions that are discriminatory towards persons with disabilities.

122. The country has established equal rights for all citizens, which does not preclude government support for persons who may need it owing to circumstances beyond their control. Equality is regarded above all as the equality of opportunity to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

123. The prohibition of discrimination in labour relations, meaning both restrictions on labour rights and the receipt of any kind of advantages on the basis of physical or psychological impairments that do not hinder job performance or other circumstances unrelated to professional competence or not specified in the worker's job description, is enshrined in article 14 of the Labour Code.

124. Pursuant to article 465 of the Labour Code, legal entities and natural persons who are guilty of violations of labour legislation are subject to disciplinary, administrative and other measures and criminal prosecution in accordance with the law.

125. In 2017, the courts imposed administrative fines in 174 cases under article 9.19 of the Code of Administrative Offences.

126. In Belarus, the removal or restriction of legal and dispositive capacity is prohibited, except in circumstances and in accordance with procedures established by law (Civil Code, art. 21).

127. The choice of a tutor or guardian must be made with consideration of his or her personal qualities, capacity to fulfil the obligations of a tutor or guardian, the relationship between the person, his or her family and the person requiring a tutor or guardian and the wishes of the person requiring a tutor or guardian, if he or she is over the age of 10 (Marriage and Family Code, art. 152).

128. In Belarus, special measures have been adopted to promote employment for persons with disabilities, including a range of actions aimed at ensuring employment for persons with disabilities and establishing in law the obligations to provide financial assistance and

to pay benefits to employers who create jobs (including specialized jobs) to be filled by persons with disabilities. Individual rehabilitation programmes are taken into account in upholding the right to work of persons with disabilities.

129. In its concern for persons with disabilities, the State not only ensures equal rights to work but also offers them certain benefits to facilitate their active participation in public life, personal development, etc.

130. In Belarus, everyone is guaranteed the protection of his or her rights and freedoms by a competent, independent and impartial court within the time periods specified by law (Constitution, art. 60).

131. Disabled persons have the inherent right to respect for their human dignity. The State guarantees that the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of persons with disabilities in Belarus will be protected. This is ensured through judicial proceedings or other means established by law (Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act, art. 6).

132. Persons who commit violations of the law on the social protection of persons with disabilities are subject to the penalties stipulated by the relevant legislation (Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act, art. 7).

Article 6

Women with disabilities

133. Measures to ensure the advancement and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities in the areas of education, employment and medical, social and legal assistance are encouraged in the country.

134. As at 1 October 2018, there were 5,084,600 women living in Belarus. Women account for 53.5 per cent of the general population and 49.5 per cent of the employed population.

135. All persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, who are not able to meet their basic needs independently are entitled to guaranteed assistance from the State.

136. Public policy on gender equality is implemented on the basis of national action plans for gender equality. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, four national action plans for gender equality have been implemented (1996–2000, 2001–2005, 2008–2010 and 2011–2015), incorporating provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The national plans were approved by the Government of Belarus. The current plan is the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2017–2020.

137. Moreover, a number of government programmes are being implemented in the country, focused on various aspects of women's advancement, including health, education, social protection, enjoyment of the right to work and participation in public and political life. These programmes include Health and Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2016–2020, the State Programme on Social Protection and Employment Promotion for 2016–2020 and Education and Youth Policy for 2016–2020.

138. The Government's National Council on Gender Policy has been operating since 2000; it coordinates the activities of national authorities and other government organizations, local executive and administrative bodies and voluntary associations working on gender equality.

139. Legislation in Belarus is intended to eliminate any discrimination related to disability, meaning not only discrimination against persons with disabilities of all ages and genders as vulnerable groups but against any persons (parents, guardians, etc.) against whom the disability of another person could be used as a basis for discrimination. This is especially important for women, including those caring for children with disabilities.

140. In order to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women, the Health Care Act³ provides that medical services for women, including during pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period, should be prioritized. Women and girls have access on an equal footing with men and boys to the free health care provided under the minimum social standards for health-care services mandated by the State.

141. Women with disabilities are entitled to free appointments for advice on family planning, the medical and psychological aspects of marriage and the family and diagnostic genetic testing in public health-care facilities for the purpose of preventing the transmission of hereditary diseases.

142. Women, including women with disabilities, have the right to choose for themselves whether or not to become mothers. Pregnancies can be terminated on medical grounds with the consent of the woman or, in the case of minors, with the written consent of their legal representative.

143. Women have the right to change and correct their gender assignment in public health-care facilities if they so wish, on medical grounds and on reaching the age of majority, based on the decision of the Interdepartmental Commission on the Medical, Psychological and Social Rehabilitation of Persons with Gender Denial Syndrome of the Ministry of Health.

Article 7

Children with disabilities

144. As at 1 August 2018, children with disabilities represented 5.6 per cent (31,632) of the total number of persons with disabilities registered with the labour, employment and social welfare agencies.

145. In Belarus, children with disabilities have all human rights and freedoms and the protection of their legitimate interests guaranteed from birth (Constitution, Rights of the Child Act, Marriage and Family Code and other laws).

146. In accordance with the Rights of the Child Act, all children have equal rights regardless of their origin, race, ethnicity, nationality, social status, wealth, sex, language, education, attitude to religion, place of residence, state of health and other circumstances relating to the child and his or her parents. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, have the full and equal protection of the State (Rights of the Child Act, art. 6).

147. The Rights of the Child Act also guarantees children's right to life, a nationality, health protection and health care, a decent standard of living, integrity of the person, protection from exploitation and violence and freedom of religion.

148. The State ensures the integrity of the child's person and protects the child from: all forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation; physical and psychological abuse; cruel, brutal or degrading treatment, humiliation and sexual harassment, including by parents (or tutors or guardians) or relatives; involvement in criminal activity; inducement to consume beer, spirits and other alcoholic drinks or to use narcotic substances, psychotropic substances and substance analogues, toxic or other stupefying substances, or tobacco products; coercion to engage in prostitution, begging or vagrancy, participate in gambling, or engage in activities connected with the production or distribution of pornographic materials or items of a pornographic nature; and becoming involved in work that may harm the child's physical, mental or moral development (Right of the Child Act, art. 9).

149. Every child has the right to receive, possess and impart information and to freedom of opinion, belief and expression. Every child is free to form his or her own views and has the right to express them freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with his or her age. In particular, the child is provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting him or her, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules set out in the legislation of Belarus (Rights of the Child Act, art. 11).

³ minzdrav.gov.by.

150. The Rights of the Child Act includes an entire chapter, number 31, on the rights of children with disabilities and special physical or psychological needs, which stipulates that such children are to be provided with: free educational, medical, social and psychological assistance; the choice of education establishment by them or their parents (tutors or guardians); special educational conditions for children with special physical or psychological needs, along with remedial interventions; help in finding work in line with their abilities; social rehabilitation; and a productive life in conditions that respect their dignity and help them to play an active part in society.

151. The system of State benefits covers more than 543,000 children, or almost one third of the country's child population. The allowance for children with disabilities is paid to 20,500 children. The benefit for children over the age of 3 for certain categories of families (the main recipients being families with children with disabilities but also families in which the parents have disabilities) is paid to 37,300 children.

152. Families in which the parents have a category I or II disability or one of the parents has a category I disability and the other parent cares for him or her and receives the corresponding benefit are entitled to the allowance for children over the age of 3 for certain categories of families until the children reach the age of 18, with no conditions as to their education (Act on State Benefits for Families Raising Children).

153. In December 2017, social services centres for families and children were granted the right to set up day-care units for children with disabilities. One such unit is to be inaugurated in 2018 in the Minsk city social services centre for families and children.

154. The Family and Childhood subprogramme of the government programme Health and Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2016–2020 includes a number of measures aimed at the social participation and rehabilitation of children with disabilities, including the national charity event Our Children and the national arts festival for children with disabilities in residential care, Dreams Come True.

155. For the purpose of preventing disabilities in children and identifying birth defects that can lead to disability, public health-care organizations provide check-ups for pregnant women and conduct ultrasound screening at the stages determined by the Ministry of Health.

156. For the early detection of mental developmental delays and sensory and mobility impairments in children, public health-care organizations provide diagnostic services as part of the regular check-ups for all children in their first year of life. These diagnostic services, which include genetic testing, are conducted on medical grounds in accordance with clinical protocols approved by the Ministry of Health. The State guarantees that all children with impairments will receive the medical, educational and psychological support and the special education interventions they need.

157. Children are recognized as having a disability by medical rehabilitation expert boards, in accordance with the procedure stipulated by the Council of Ministers.

158. Depending on the extent of the impairment of bodily functions, organs and systems and the limitations on functioning of children recognized as having a disability, they are placed in a category of children with disabilities, with a certain degree of impairment for periods of 1, 2, 5 and up to 18 years.

159. The medical rehabilitation expert boards responsible for assigning children to the category "children with disabilities" consider the specific characteristics of impairments in children and of the child's development together with basic age-appropriate activities and the particular care needs of the child. Rehabilitation and habilitation measures are reflected in the child's individual rehabilitation programme and are specific to the child. Medical rehabilitation for children with disabilities is offered by health-care organizations in the form of routine primary or specialist or high-tech medical care. The level of rehabilitation depends on the treatment and diagnostic capacity of the health-care organization. Medical rehabilitation is provided after stabilization of the body's vital life functions in the acute, early and late recovery phases of an illness and to patients with sequelae or at risk of sequelae from an illness.

160. Inpatient and outpatient medical rehabilitation is provided to children with disabilities at four levels: national, provincial, interdistrict and district (city). At all these

levels, the basic principles of medical rehabilitation are observed: start it early and ensure continuity of care and an integrated, staged, uninterrupted and individual approach.

161. Inpatient medical rehabilitation services for children are available in 37 units (1,952 beds). The main (socially significant) group of children who need inpatient medical rehabilitation are those with diseases of the nervous system, musculoskeletal system and connective tissue or respiratory organs, trauma and birth defects (birth defects of the circulatory system, central nervous system, genitourinary system and birth defects and deformations of the musculoskeletal system).

162. At the national level, rehabilitation for children is provided within national health-care organizations.

163. Outpatient medical rehabilitation is offered to children in 48 medical rehabilitation units as well as in early intervention clinics (units) for children under the age of 5.

164. When children, including children with disabilities, who have been found by a doctor to require additional care receive inpatient treatment in public health-care facilities, one of the parents or carers of the minor with a disability is allowed to stay with the child in the health-care facility, which ensures that the focus of the medical interventions is in the child's best interests.

165. Belarus has a working system of palliative care for children with disabilities, which is offered to patients with incurable life-limiting illnesses, requiring the use of treatment methods aimed at relieving pain and easing the other symptoms of disease, regardless of diagnostic classification, when all other treatment methods have been exhausted and in order to improve the patient's quality of life.

166. Short and long-term palliative care is provided to children based on clinical protocols and treatment methods.

167. Inpatient palliative care for children is provided by public hospitals and other health-care organizations; outpatient care is available in palliative care clinics, day treatment units and outside health-care facilities through a home-based palliative care service of the health-care organization.

168. Children receive assistive technology free of charge or on preferential terms in accordance with the State register (list) of assistive technology. The list is constantly being updated with new assistive technology. Children with disabilities are entitled to free prescription medicines and free health resort treatment and recuperation (on medical grounds and in the absence of contraindications).

169. Under the legislation of Belarus, children with disabilities are entitled to basic, supplementary and special education. Special conditions, taking into consideration their state of health, medical indications and contraindications and cognitive abilities, are created for them to receive an education and the necessary remedial interventions are made.

Article 8

Awareness-raising

170. The Government implements a consistent policy of awareness-raising, aimed at improving public awareness about disability issues and providing positive representations of persons with disabilities.

171. The Convention has been translated into Russian and Belarusian. It is publicly available in Russian on the web page of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection at <http://mintrud.gov.by>. More than 3,000 copies of the Convention have been disseminated in all regions of the country. The Belarusian Association of Visually Impaired Persons initiated and organized the publication of 100 copies of the Convention in Braille.

172. Public cultural events, fundraisers and press conferences are held to mark Mother's Day, the International Day of Families, the International Day of Older Persons, International Children's Day and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

173. Positive representations of persons with disabilities have been promoted through publicity for the victories of Paralympic and Deaflympic athletes, the organization of creative contests and the granting of community awards.

174. Issues affecting persons with disabilities, ways to resolve them and the social integration of such persons were widely discussed in both the print and broadcast media as part of the regional campaign Inclusive Belarus, which was held from 24 October to 10 December 2016 under the auspices of the United Nations office in Belarus.

175. The press club for regional media held meetings on the theme “A barrier-free environment: a media perspective”, which were attended by representatives of UNDP in Belarus, the Ministry of Information and managers and employees of national and regional media on issues related to the role of the media in including persons with disabilities in active social life, creating an accessible environment and breaking down stereotypes.

176. In the first quarter of 2017, the national State television and radio company, Belteleradiocompany, began operating broadcast servers with support for closed captioning (activated through a special function on the television remote control), which led to a 22 per cent increase in content adapted for a deaf and hard-of-hearing audience by the end of 2017. The total amount of adapted content over the year was 637 hours.

177. In order to inform the deaf and hard-of-hearing television audience that television programmes with closed captions were available, a special banner with detailed instructions on the use of closed captions was published on the Belteleradiocompany and Ministry of Information websites and informational videos were broadcast on State television channels.

178. Topics including the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, the work of civil society organizations, the volunteer movement and items featuring persons with disabilities are regularly shown on the television programmes *Let's Be Healthy*, *PRO-sport* and *Point of View*. They are also featured in stories in the television news shows *Morning Espresso* and *Novosti* (News), among others.

179. For the information of deaf and hard-of-hearing persons, the provincial broadcasting studios of the television channel Belarus 4 broadcast the main national and provincial news stories on a scrolling ticker.

180. The specialist television channel Zhest, founded by the Local Fund for Finding and Supporting Third Millennium Talent, also makes broadcasts. The channel's broadcast schedule includes news, cultural, educational and entertainment programmes, all of them captioned. The channel is broadcast as part of the expanded channel package of a number of telecommunications operators providing cable television services, including Minsk Television Information Networks.

181. In 2017, the Narodnaya Asveta company published books from the School Library series in Braille for children with visual impairments (47 books (13 titles) with a print run of 1,081 copies).

182. The national weekly newspaper *Vmeste*, which was founded by the Belarusian Society of Persons with Disabilities and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, is included every year in the list of media that receive support from the national budget.

183. Separate work is carried out to report on issues concerning children with disabilities. The leading print media (the newspapers *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, *Respublika*, *Zvyazda*, including its supplements *Chyrvonka*, *Chyrvonaya Zmena* and *Syameinaya Gazeta*, *Znamya Yunosti* and *Selskaya Gazeta*), national television and radio channels and BelTA web pages regularly feature material about volunteering, the rehabilitation of children with children with disabilities and the measures taken to defend their rights and legitimate interests.

184. Thematic press events covering this subject are held in the Dom Pressy press centre, with participation by representatives of national government agencies.

185. In December 2017, the Ministry of Information and UNDP signed the Information Strategy of the Republic of Belarus for the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

186. Work has been carried out to ensure communication on the Government's activities to resolve the issues of persons with disabilities, provide them with medical, rehabilitation and social assistance, create an accessible environment and ensure equality of opportunity.

187. The Ministry of Health has developed regulations on cooperation with the media by health-care organizations for the purpose of informing the public about health issues and disease prevention and control. In accordance with these regulations, issues concerning persons with disabilities are covered in press conferences, round tables, radio and television appearances by health-care specialists and articles and advice columns in question and answer format in the press.

188. Awareness-raising includes the production and publication of study guides, information, reference materials, resource kits and guidelines on creating a barrier-free environment, promoting tolerance towards persons with disabilities, disability prevention and the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

189. Awareness-raising in the spirit of the Convention is focused on ensuring an inclusive culture in educational establishments. Such a culture provides for common values of inclusion, which are shared and accepted by everyone involved in the educational process (education workers and students and their legal representatives). This primarily means drawing the attention of the media to the issue of teaching children with special physical or psychological needs. Many periodicals (including the newspapers *Respublika* and *Nastaunitskaya Gazeta* and the magazine *Pachatkovaya Shkola*) cover the challenges of children with such needs.

Article 9

Accessibility

Policy

190. In view of the critical importance of ensuring that the physical environment, facilities and services open to and provided for the public are accessible to persons with disabilities, the Government is constantly striving to create the conditions in which persons with disabilities can live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.

191. A number of State programmes, strategic plans of key ministries and territorial development programmes provide for measures and contain indicators relating to the creation of a barrier-free environment, accessible services and improved quality of life for persons with disabilities in all areas of public life, including education, health care, the workplace and physical culture and sports.

192. In order to streamline the activities and strengthen the accountability of local executive bodies, each province approves regional plans for the creation of a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities. These plans contain a list of the specific buildings and facilities that must be adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Existing legislation

193. The Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act (arts. 24 to 29) requires State authorities, local authorities and administrative bodies and other organizations to ensure that persons with disabilities have free access to social infrastructure and residential, public and industrial buildings and structures, that they have unimpeded use of communications and information systems, leisure and recreational areas, public transport and transport links and that they are able to find their way and freely move about at railway and bus stations, river ports and airports.

194. The Act on Architectural, Urban Planning and Construction Activities sets out the requirements of a favourable environment for the everyday activities of persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility (older persons, persons with locomotor impairments, pregnant women, preschool children and adults carrying children or pushing them in strollers). These include conditions in which such persons can freely move about (on foot or by wheelchair or private or public transport), access buildings and structures, including residential blocks and apartments, and move about and carry out activities inside these facilities, and also at leisure and tourism areas and other recreational or health facilities. The Act further stipulates that State standards governing architectural, urban planning and construction activities should regulate all stages of the design and

construction process and must be complied with by all entities carrying out architectural, urban planning or construction activities.

195. Following the signature of the Convention, efforts to ensure accessibility were stepped up in the following areas: improving existing legislation; standardization; strengthening accountability and monitoring of compliance with existing legislation; assessing the accessibility of transport and social infrastructure for persons with disabilities; legislative and financial resources for the provision of accessible transport and social infrastructure; and the accessibility of public services for persons with disabilities.

196. The requirements of a barrier-free environment are set out in 25 technical documents, which have been compiled into a list of the technical documents in the area of architecture and construction that govern the creation of facilities for a barrier-free environment. This list of technical documents has been uploaded to the website of the Ministry of Architecture (<http://mas.gov.by/>) and the website of Stroytechnorm, a national unitary enterprise (<https://stn.by/>).

197. The technical documents included in the list are related to the technical regulations entitled “Buildings and structures, construction materials and products: safety” (TR 2009/013/BY), which was approved by government decision. These standards and requirements must be complied with and are aimed at establishing essential requirements for the safety of persons with disabilities.

198. In 2016, a Technical Code of Practice, entitled “Land improvements: surfacing roads with paving” was introduced. On 1 November 2017, design plans (drawings) for tactile paving and kerbs for pedestrian zones and transit stops and were also introduced.

199. On 1 October 2018, Technical Code of Practice No. 45-3.02-318-2018, entitled “Living environment for persons with reduced mobility: building design standards”, was put into effect. It establishes basic requirements that must be complied with in the design of residential and public buildings or structures and industrial buildings in order to provide a living environment conducive to the social activities of persons with reduced mobility.

200. The concept of universal design in the creation of a barrier-free environment is described in paragraph 89 of this report.

201. In order to systematize information relating to the creation of a barrier-free environment and make it available to various user groups, a set of recommendations on the creation of a barrier-free environment in the design of buildings and structures for various purposes has been developed and approved. The recommendations were drawn up following a thorough review of the aspects of the environment that are most important and most frequently used by all citizens, including persons with disabilities. The recommendations were drawn up with due regard to the design and construction experience of Russia, European countries (Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden) and Asian countries (China and Japan).

202. In 2017, amendments relating to the use of vertical lifting platforms for persons with disabilities who use wheelchairs and all persons who use strollers for children were drafted and introduced into the technical documents.

State monitoring

203. State monitoring of compliance with construction standards and rules is defined in the Act on Architectural, Urban Planning and Construction Activities. Such activities are managed by State bodies (and their subdivisions, local bodies and subordinate organizations) and other organizations within the limits of their powers as prescribed by law.

204. From the very beginning of a construction project, and before a facility can open, compliance with State standards concerning accessibility for people with reduced mobility is subject to special monitoring.

205. Following the checks carried out in 2017, 414 projects for which the plans and estimates were submitted for State review were finalized on the basis of the comments made by experts. Moreover, unfavourable opinions were issued with respect to 33 projects, which were referred back for further work.

206. The bill on the rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion establishes liability for violations of the rights of persons with disabilities, including non-compliance with requirements for the creation of conditions in which such persons have unimpeded access to social, civil or transport infrastructure.

Transport infrastructure: railway transport

207. The rules governing the transport of passengers, luggage and cargo by public railway require carriers to provide information on available services, how journeys can be made and the accessibility of infrastructure.

208. Carriers or their representatives ensure that, wherever possible, railway stations, platforms and rolling stock are accessible to persons with disabilities.

209. Persons with disabilities who require assistance in accessing railway stations, passenger platforms or rolling stock are to inform the carrier of their travel plans.

210. The rules permit persons with disabilities to travel with a wheelchair or other mobility aid in addition to their hand baggage allowance free of charge.

211. In order to ensure the mobility of persons with disabilities, Belarusian Railway standard STP BC 20.376-2018 on the functional, ergonomic and aesthetic requirements of passenger trains consisting of newly purchased multiple units stipulates that newly purchased multiple units must have special seating for persons with disabilities, information displayed in Braille and equipment for displaying audio information visually.

212. Whenever Belarusian Railway facilities undergo reconstruction or renovation, work is carried out to ensure that they are adapted for use by persons with disabilities.

213. In keeping with the subprogramme on a barrier-free environment for the everyday activities of persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility, which is part of the State Programme on Social Protection and Promotion of Employment for the period 2016–2020, work was carried out to adapt 66 Belarusian Railway facilities (railway stations and stops) for use by persons with disabilities in the period 2016–2017. The adaptations include the installation of ramps, handrails, lowering of pedestrian level crossings, tactile paving and platform elevators in pedestrian underpasses.

214. As at 1 January 2018, the Belarusian Railway had 20 locomotive-hauled carriages and 7 three-carriage, 10 four-carriage, 6 five-carriage and 2 seven-carriage multiple-unit trains equipped for passengers with disabilities of all groups.

215. Railway station staff and railway conductors help passengers with disabilities to board and disembark from trains. These duties are set out in their job descriptions.

Transport infrastructure: road transport

216. In 2017, in keeping with the Convention, a draft decision aimed at amending the road passenger transport rules was prepared and submitted to the Government. With regard to disability rights, it provides for the following:

- The right of persons with disabilities to travel with wheelchairs, canes, crutches, walking frames and other assistive devices for personal use, free of charge
- The right of persons with visual impairments to travel with a specially trained guide dog on domestic road journeys, free of charge
- The requirement that crew members should provide assistance to passengers with disabilities, with their consent, when they are boarding and disembarking from the vehicle or purchasing a ticket
- The requirement that high-capacity buses should have at least four designated seats for passengers with preschool-age children, pregnant women, persons with disabilities and older persons
- The requirement that pregnant women, persons with preschool-age children and persons with disabilities should be given priority in the allocation of taxis

- The requirement that the owner of a passenger terminal should facilitate unimpeded access for persons with disabilities and other persons with reduced mobility to all its facilities

217. In 2017, 89 low-floor passenger transport vehicles (41 buses, 28 trolleybuses and 20 electric buses) were purchased from the national budget at a cost of 452.4 million roubles. This brought the proportion of low-floored vehicles in the fleet to 43.4 per cent by 1 January 2017 and 44.3 per cent by 1 January 2018.

218. During the renovations carried out in 2017 (the creation of dropped kerbs and accessible ramps and laying of tactile paving), 424 pedestrian crossings were adapted, 281 stretches of sidewalk were adapted for use by persons with visual impairments and wheelchair users, and 166 public transport stops were adapted for use by persons with visual impairments (barrier-free access measures, such as tactile paving, were introduced, and the installation of electronic beacons to provide audio information will ensure that the stops are fully adapted for use by blind persons and persons with visual impairments). In addition, 94 traffic lights were fitted with audible signals for the benefit of all persons with disabilities; and nine bus stations have been adapted to ensure access for all persons with disabilities.

219. Barrier-free access measures have been introduced at all Minsk Metro stations. They include 24 elevators, 22 inclined platform elevators, 2 vertical platform elevators and 15 tracked stair climbers. Information beacons have been introduced for persons with visual impairments at 4 stations, and 24 subway train information systems with scrolling text displays have also been installed.

220. Minsk Metro has produced a detailed guide to the barrier-free access measures in place at all stations. The online map can be accessed on the company's website (www.metropoliten.by). The guide includes additional information on the procedure and conditions for the use of the subway by persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility. There is also a guide showing the route that a wheelchair user, for example, must take to reach the train from street level. Passengers with disabilities are now able to plan their journeys on underground railways in advance and use underground railway services on arrival at the station.

Transport infrastructure: air transport

221. The provision of services for persons with disabilities is regulated by an internal quality standard developed in 2012 in conjunction with the Belarusian Partnership of Persons with Visual Impairments and the Belarusian Association of Wheelchair Users, two voluntary associations of persons with disabilities. The standard was revised and updated in 2016.

222. With a view to implementing measures to create a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility, aviation companies are constantly striving to create the conditions in which such persons can move about freely, whether on foot, by wheelchair or by private or public transport, and enjoy unimpeded access to buildings and structures.

223. With regard to airports and airlines, persons with disabilities are assisted in clearing customs and border checks and other formalities and are given special seating on board the aircraft. Minsk National Airport has special elevators, escalators and areas for persons with disabilities, illuminated signage and information displays and accessible lavatories. In addition, the entrances and exits have wheelchair ramps. The information system in the air terminal complex provides information, including via public address, in Russian, English, Belarusian and Chinese.

224. In November 2016, specialists from the Belarusian Association of Wheelchair Users helped to organize hands-on training at Minsk National Airport for staff members who interact with passengers who use wheelchairs. In 2016, five airport employees underwent training at the Aeroflot Aviation School on interacting with passengers with disabilities.

Social services

225. The Government recognizes that the State must lead by example in ensuring accessibility and thus achieving effective results and is doing everything possible to make public services accessible to persons with disabilities.

226. The State Minimum Social Standards Act defines State minimum standards for the provision of social services to citizens living on low incomes or in difficult circumstances.

227. One such standard contains a list of free public social services provided by State social service institutions and the general rules and requirements for the provision of such services, which were approved by a Council of Ministers decision on certain aspects of social service provision.

228. The Social Services Act states that social services are provided both free of charge and in return for payment (art. 31).

229. The social services provided by State social service institutions that are part of the system of labour, employment and social protection bodies are included in the list of social goods and services for which costs or fees are regulated by provincial executive committees and the Minsk municipal executive committee.

230. The rates for social services provided within the framework of the State minimum social standards for the provision of social services are set below their cost in order to ensure their accessibility. On average, the fees charged do not exceed 20 per cent of the cost.

231. Persons with disabilities who do not have the capacity to work are entitled to social services if they meet two criteria: they have a low income (poverty) and do not have family members with the capacity to work who have a legal obligation to support them (isolation).

232. In order to ensure access to social services for persons in rural areas, local social services centres are developing a network of social units and branches and organizing home maintenance teams and mobile social service teams. The country has 1,252 social units and branches, 166 mobile social service teams and 76 household maintenance teams.

233. In keeping with the Convention, a bill aimed at amending the laws relating to the social protection of persons with disabilities, which is currently being drafted, establishes the requirement that employees of organizations that provide public services must help persons with disabilities to overcome barriers that prevent them from receiving services on an equal basis with others.

234. Under existing legislation, specialists travel to meet persons with disabilities who are not able to present themselves in person so as to receive and issue completed documentation at their place of residence. For example, in accordance with paragraph 52 of their rules of professional ethics, lawyers may visit clients if so required by the state of the latter's health. Article 13 (3) of the Notaries and Notarial Activities Act states that notaries and authorized officials of local authorities and administrative bodies may carry out their activities at a location other than their practices or offices at the request of an interested party. Paragraph 291 of the regulations on the procedure for civil registration and the issuance of official paperwork and certificates by civil registration bodies states that marriages may be registered at a location other than a civil registry office of a local authority or administrative body or a civil ceremony venue of a municipal executive committee or village or rural authority or administrative body if, for valid reasons or in certain circumstances (for example, for health reasons), the persons to be married are unable to present themselves at these bodies in person. In such cases, the marriage may be registered at the citizen's place of residence, a place at which he or she is receiving medical care on an inpatient basis or another location.

Article 10**Right to life**

235. The right of all persons to life is enshrined in article 24 (1) of the Constitution. The State safeguards this right against unlawful infringements of any kind.

236. The Criminal Code establishes the offences of murder, the murder of the mother of a newborn, murder as a crime of passion and offences that result in loss of life (Criminal Code, chap. 19).

237. Restricting the application of the death penalty is an important element of the right to life. The Constitution stipulates that the death penalty is the ultimate sanction of the law for especially serious offences and may be imposed only in accordance with the verdict of a court of law (Constitution, art. 24 (2)).

238. The State offers free medical care to all persons, including persons with disabilities, in order to preserve human life and health. In fulfilment of the country's international obligations, the Health Care Act prohibits euthanasia, even when performed with the assistance of medical or pharmaceutical personnel.

239. Ensuring that health services are provided as close as possible to people's own communities, including in rural areas, is an important aspect of the realization at the national level of the general principle that medical assistance should be accessible, including for persons with disabilities. In rural areas, the following facilities are available to provide medical assistance to persons with disabilities: obstetric units, rural outpatient clinics, general practice outpatient clinics and rural community hospitals. Persons with category I disabilities who live in rural areas receive inpatient medical care at least once a year.

240. There are 18 district and inter-district multidisciplinary medical rehabilitation departments, which ensures the accessibility of medical rehabilitation services.

Article 11

Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies

241. In Belarus, persons with disabilities have the right to the appropriate assistance in the event of an emergency on an equal basis with other citizens.

242. Under the Act on the Protection of the Population and Territory from Natural and Artificial Emergencies, Belarusian citizens have the right to protection of life, health and personal property in the event of a natural or artificial emergency.

243. Belarus has a functional State emergency prevention and response system.

244. The State emergency prevention and response system includes a functional information management system. One of its main functions is to warn all citizens about possible emergencies and how to respond in the event of an emergency.

245. Persons with disabilities are guaranteed protection and safety in situations of risk and emergencies on an equal basis with others.

246. Situations of risk and natural and human-caused emergencies at the local level have been addressed in plans on the protection of the population and territory from natural and artificial emergencies and civil defence.

247. Among the measures to prevent and respond to natural and artificial emergencies in the administrative units are search and rescue operations, including for persons with disabilities, and evacuations, which involve the temporary movement of people away from areas of potential danger. There is a procedure for evacuating persons with locomotor impairments, persons with disabilities, older persons and various other groups by vehicle.

248. In the event of an emergency, persons with disabilities will receive the appropriate assistance, including access to safe areas, on an equal basis with others.

249. Belarus has a unified 101 and 112 emergency response service, which receives and processes communications from individuals and legal entities regarding the risk or occurrence of emergency situations, fires, threats to life or of harm to health and other events requiring emergency measures to be taken in coordination with the emergency services, within the limits of their powers.

250. In Belarus, persons with hearing and visual impairments are provided with mobile telephones subsidized through the State budget.

251. The Ministry for Emergency Response operates a version of its website for persons with visual impairments in order to ensure the accessibility of information, including instructional materials, to persons with disabilities.

252. The videos uploaded to YouTube by the Ministry for Emergency Response all have subtitles for persons with hearing impairments.

253. Within its designated responsibilities and functions, the Ministry designs and places public service advertisements to promote safety skills in society and produces and distributes emergency preparedness posters, booklets and brochures among the public, including persons with disabilities.

254. In 2017, in order to improve public safety awareness, the agencies and subdivisions responsible for emergency response produced over 1,900 types of such resources, with a total print run of 3,433,905, for dissemination among the public and display on information boards. Public service advertisements were displayed on 138,406 seats on public transport, on the sides of 510 public transport vehicles and on 398 types of consumer goods.

255. In keeping with the Convention, a draft programme on the organization of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in the Ministry for Emergency Response is currently being prepared.

256. The Belarusian Society of Persons with Disabilities based in Minsk province is exploring how to involve persons with disabilities in the work of the agencies and subdivisions responsible for emergency response, particularly as volunteer interpreters during major international events in Minsk province.

257. Under a plan of joint activities between Belarus and the International Committee of the Red Cross, proposals have been made for the exchange of experience, guidance and training on how to organize employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Article 12

Equal recognition before the law

258. In Belarus, all persons with disabilities have the right to legal protection on the same basis as others. All citizens are equal before the law and the courts, which fully includes persons with disabilities.

259. No one may have their legal or dispositive capacity limited in any circumstance or manner other than those established by law.

260. In Belarus, persons with disabilities have the right to participate fully in civic life, to own or inherit property, to control their own financial affairs and to have equal access to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit.

Article 13

Access to justice

261. All persons in Belarus have the right to the legal protection of their rights and freedoms.

262. The constitutional principle of the equality of citizens before the law and the courts has been established in all branches of the law, including in the Civil Code (art. 2), the Code of Civil Procedure (art. 12), the Code of Commercial Procedure (art. 15), the Criminal Code (art. 3), the Code of Criminal Procedure (art. 20), the Code of Administrative Offences (art. 4.2) and the Code of Administrative Procedure and Enforcement (art. 2.12).

263. The legislation on civil, criminal and administrative procedure provides for the participation of sign language interpreters in judicial proceedings if a party to the proceedings has a hearing impairment (Code of Civil Procedure (art. 102), Code of Criminal Procedure (art. 63) and Code of Administrative Procedure and Enforcement (art. 2.12)).

264. The court appoints representatives for parties or interveners in proceedings who lack dispositive capacity in the event that they are not already represented (Code of Civil Procedure, art. 77).

265. The cases in which persons with category I or II disabilities may receive free legal assistance in the form of oral consultations that do not require a document review are also specified in law (Bar and Advocacy Act, art. 28).

266. Pursuant to article 257 of the Tax Code, persons who participated in or acquired disabilities during the Great Patriotic War and persons who acquired disabilities during military action abroad are exempt from the State fee for the submission of statements of claim other than those relating to property disputes and for cassational and supervisory appeals (both first and second instance) filed against decisions on statements of claim other than those relating to property disputes.

267. Article 258 of the Tax Code sets out further grounds on which individuals who are not engaged in business activities, including persons with disabilities, may be exempted from payment of the State fee. For example, in respect of items that attract the State fee but are not related to business activities, a court or judge may grant an exemption from full or partial payment on the basis of an individual's property status.

268. A witness may be examined by a court at his or her place of residence if illness, old age or a disability prevents him or her from appearing in court following a summons (Code of Civil Procedure, art. 188).

269. The parties and other persons with a legal interest in the outcome of a case may participate in court hearings, including preliminary hearings, by video link (Code of Civil Procedure, art. 185).

270. The participation of a defence lawyer is mandatory in criminal proceedings if the suspect or accused person is unable to exercise his or her right to a defence as a result of a physical or mental impairment (Code of Criminal Procedure, art. 45).

271. If, as a result of a physical impairment or health condition, a person suspected or accused of an offence or a victim or witness brought in for questioning is unable to sign the record of the proceedings, the investigator or person conducting the initial inquiry may, with the consent of those questioned, invite another person to certify the accuracy of the transcript. The record is signed by the investigator or person conducting the initial inquiry who led the questioning. For other investigative actions, it is noted in the record that the person in question was not capable of signing it. This is then certified with the signatures of the investigator or person conducting the initial inquiry and other persons who participated in the investigative action in question (Code of Criminal Procedure, art. 194).

272. Whenever courts of general jurisdiction consider civil, criminal, administrative or economic cases in which the parties have disabilities, they adopt an individualized approach tailored to the needs and capacities of the persons concerned.

273. Criminal legislation establishes the principle of individualized punishment and prohibits the imposition of certain forms of punishment on persons with category I or II disabilities. The forms of punishment that are prohibited include community service, punitive work, short terms of rigorous imprisonment and semi-custodial sentences in open institutions (Criminal Code, arts. 49, 52, 54 and 55).

274. In order to avoid restricting access to justice, it was made clear in decision No. 11 of the plenum of the Supreme Court of 20 December 2013 on ensuring transparency in the administration of justice and disseminating information regarding court activities that judicial proceedings, including the venue at which they are held, should be organized so as to facilitate the presence of persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility in the courtroom (para. 2).

275. The process of designing, constructing and renovating the buildings of courts of general jurisdiction is currently being carried out with due regard to the requirements for ensuring unimpeded access for persons with disabilities.

276. The Supreme Court of Belarus has taken organizational steps to ensure that court employees undergo advanced and skills development training on working with persons with different disabilities. It has been proposed that the advanced training plan at the Belarusian

State University Institute for Further and Advanced Training for Judges, Prosecutors and other Judicial Officers should include lectures and workshops involving psychologists, teachers, sociologists and other specialists on the following themes: the rights of persons with disabilities and the challenge of realizing them; and ways of interaction and methods and modes of communication with persons with disabilities.

277. The website of the courts of general jurisdiction has been modernized. This involved the creation of fully functional web pages for the provincial courts, a Belarusian-language version, a State fee calculator and a calendar of court hearings. The modernized website went live on 1 March 2018.

278. As at 14 July 2017, the website had the following features:

- A judicial portal, which allows users to submit procedural appeals to courts considering economic cases (<http://service.court.by/ru/public/schedule/>).
- A database of court rulings, which contains the operative parts of decisions and rulings of courts of appeal and cassation rendered by provincial economic courts, the economic court of the city of Minsk and the economic division of the Supreme Court (<http://service.court.by/ru/juridical/judgmentresults>). The database allows users to search by category and type of dispute, the date and type of judicial ruling and the court that adopted the ruling.

279. The Supreme Court of Belarus also transmits documents to the National Legal Information Centre, including electronic copies of decisions of the plenum and the presidium of the Supreme Court for publication. It also transmits decisions of courts of general jurisdiction, reviews of judicial practice and decisions of provincial economic courts and the economic court of the city of Minsk for inclusion in a special database of court decisions, which has been integrated into the Etalon information retrieval system for the courts, the procuratorial system, lawyers, other organizations and citizens, and in a database of court decisions set up to support the work of the courts.

Article 14

Liberty and security of the person

280. The Constitution guarantees everyone, including persons with disabilities, human rights and freedoms (art. 21) and the right to liberty and security of the person (arts. 25, 27 and 28). A person may be deprived of his or her personal liberty in the situations and according to the procedure established by law.

281. Under article 28 of the Constitution, everyone has a right to protection against arbitrary interference in his or her private life, against infringements of the confidentiality of his or her correspondence and telephone or other communications and against attacks upon his or her honour or reputation.

282. Article 60 of the Constitution guarantees everyone the protection of his or her rights and freedoms by a competent, independent and impartial court within the time periods specified by law.

283. Under the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, courts may order coercive safety and treatment measures to be applied in respect of persons who have committed acts defined under criminal law as posing a threat to the community, persons unfit to plead or persons who, since the commission of the offence, have begun to suffer from psychiatric disorders or illnesses that make them unable to understand the significance of their actions or control them, if their actions and mental state are of a nature as to present a danger to society.

284. Persons remanded in custody have the right to have the legality of their arrest or detention reviewed by a court (Constitution, art. 25).

285. In order to prevent unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, including that of persons with disabilities, and ensure that any deprivation of liberty complies with the law, the Criminal Code establishes the following offences: abduction (art. 128), unlawful deprivation of liberty (art. 183) and unlawful admission to a psychiatric inpatient facility (art. 128).

286. In 2016, following the ratification of the Convention, cells were refurbished to accommodate wheelchair users and persons with locomotor impairments at all Ministry of Internal Affairs remand facilities. In 2017, sleeping and washing areas at correctional colony No. 2 were adapted for use by wheelchair users and persons with locomotor impairments.

287. In 2017, persons with disabilities made up 2 per cent of the overall population of the penalties enforcement system (734 persons). Over the last five years, the number of persons with disabilities imprisoned for committing an offence has increased by 0.04 per cent.

288. Persons with category I or II disabilities, women and single men who have dependent minor children, including children with disabilities, persons responsible for those with category I disabilities and persons caring for persons aged 80 years or over may not be detained in connection with an administrative offence (Code of Administrative Offences, art. 6.7 (2)).

Article 15

Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

289. In accordance with article 25 of the Constitution, no one may be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment or be subjected without his or her consent to medical or other experimentation. Persons with disabilities in Belarus are protected from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The dignity of the person is inviolable and protected by the State.

290. Under article 128 of the Criminal Code, torture is a criminal offence and is categorized as a crime against humanity.

291. In accordance with the Constitution and the principles and rules of international law, the penalties enforcement legislation of Belarus and the manner in which it is applied are based on strict compliance with safeguards against the use of torture, violence and other cruel or degrading treatment against prisoners (Penalties Enforcement Code, art. 3 (3)).

Article 16

Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse

292. The Criminal Code of Belarus protects persons with disabilities from cruel treatment, violence and exploitation on an equal basis with others. In addition, the Criminal Code establishes aggravating circumstances with respect to offences involving the exploitation of persons known to be minors or known by the perpetrator to have a psychiatric disorder or illness or an intellectual impairment (Criminal Code, art. 64 (1) (14)).

293. In Belarus, forced labour is prohibited, with the exception of work or service imposed by a court order or in accordance with the law on states of emergency and martial law (Constitution, art. 41).

294. If a child's parents (or a sole parent) lead a dissolute life that has a harmful effect on the child, are chronic alcoholics or drug addicts or are otherwise unable properly to fulfil their responsibilities to raise and support the child, thereby placing the child in a socially dangerous situation, the parents (or sole parent) may be deprived of their parental rights (Marriage and Family Code, art. 85-1) or a court may remove the child from the care of his or her parents, in accordance with his or her interests, without depriving them of their parental rights (Marriage and Family Code, art. 85).

295. The legislation in place to combat domestic violence has been strengthened. In addition to existing domestic violence concepts and the power granted to State bodies and organizations to prevent domestic violence, a new individual protection measure has been introduced into the Principles of Crime Prevention Act, namely a protection order that can be served against a person who has committed domestic abuse to restrict him or her from certain activities.

296. With the support of the United Nations Population Fund, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection have implemented international

technical assistance projects to combat gender-based violence. Sociological studies on domestic violence have been carried out at the national and regional (Brest province) levels.

297. A system has been created to provide comprehensive support and a full range of social services to victims of trafficking in persons. A system for the provision of temporary shelter services is rapidly being developed by the local social services centres. Since the beginning of 2011, the number of crisis centres has increased fourfold. As at 1 January 2017, there were 124 such centres across the country; they were open in every district of Viciebsk, Mahilioŭ and Minsk provinces.

298. Persons who are victims of trafficking and related offences have a 30-day period in which they may undergo rehabilitation and consider whether to seek criminal prosecution. During this period, they may be accommodated in a crisis centre and receive social services free of charge. Such persons undergo rehabilitation regardless of whether they participate in any criminal proceedings.

299. Persons with the status of victims of trafficking have the right to receive social care for an indefinite period, as do victims of violence. The procedure for receiving each type of care is governed by departmental regulations of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

300. The rights of victims of crime and abuse of authority are protected by law. The objectives of criminal procedure law are to set out the proper legal procedure for the conduct of the criminal proceedings, safeguard the legal rights and interests of individuals and legal entities that have suffered physical or moral injuries or damage to property, ensure the criminal prosecution and defence of persons suspected or accused of acts recognized under criminal law as posing a threat to the community, foster respect in society for human and civil rights and freedoms and promote justice (Code of Criminal Procedure, art. 2).

Article 17

Protecting the integrity of the person

301. Article 25 of the Constitution stipulates that the Government guarantees the freedom, inviolability and dignity of the individual. Any restriction or deprivation of personal liberty may be imposed only in situations and according to the procedure established by law.

302. Medical care may not be provided to citizens without their prior and voluntary consent (Health Care Act, art. 44).

303. The provision of psychiatric care is subject to the patient's prior consent. Psychiatric care is provided to minors aged under 14 years and persons declared in accordance with the legally established procedure as having no dispositive capacity, subject to the written consent of a legal guardian or a decision of the tutorship and guardianship agencies. The patient or his or her legal guardian has the right to refuse psychiatric care (art. 18), unless such care is being provided at an inpatient facility on the basis of a court order for involuntary admission and treatment (Psychiatric Care Act, arts. 17, 18 and 36)

304. In 2017, 57,010 persons with disabilities were registered with health-care organizations in connection with a psychiatric or behavioural disorder.

305. One of the measures in place to protect persons with disabilities from medical or other interference without their free and informed consent is the requirement of consent for organ transplants (Organ and Tissue Transplant Act, art. 8).

Article 18

Liberty of movement and nationality

306. Any person legally in the territory of Belarus has the right to freely move about and choose his or her place of residence; all persons have the right to leave the country. Citizens have the right to return to Belarus without hindrance (Constitution, art. 30).

307. The Nationality Act places no restrictions on the acquisition of nationality by persons with disabilities. Pursuant to the Act, a citizen of Belarus may under no circumstances be deprived of his or her nationality or the right to change nationality or be expelled from the country.

308. The principles of Belarusian citizenship and the rules governing citizenship issues do not restrict the rights of citizens on social, racial, ethnic, linguistic or religious grounds (Nationality Act, art. 3). Citizenship is acquired and rescinded in accordance with the law and is identical and equal regardless of the basis on which it was acquired.

309. Acquisition of Belarusian nationality through birth is enshrined in Belarusian law. A child may obtain nationality if, on the day of his or her birth, one or both parents are Belarusian nationals (regardless of where the child is born). A child may acquire Belarusian nationality if he or she was born in the territory of Belarus, even if his or her parents (or sole parent) are foreigners or stateless persons (Nationality Act, art. 13).

310. In accordance with article 68 of the Marriage and Family Code, every child must be registered immediately after birth and, from birth, has the right to a name, to acquire nationality and, to the extent possible, to know and be cared for by his or her parents. No distinction is made in the Code among children on the basis of their physical condition. Thus, all children, including children with disabilities, must be registered with the registration authorities at birth.

Article 19

Living independently and being included in the community

311. Pursuant to article 36 of the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, in accordance with their statutes, voluntary associations of persons with disabilities and voluntary associations of their representatives participate in the resolution of problems relating to the social protection of persons with disabilities.

312. The State authorities, local authorities and administrative bodies and other organizations involve representatives of voluntary organizations of persons with disabilities in the preparation, adoption and implementation of decisions that affect their interests.

313. The State ensures respect for the rights and legitimate interests of voluntary associations of persons with disabilities, creates the conditions in which these associations can accomplish the tasks stipulated in their statutes and supports and assists them (Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, art. 36).

314. Article 29 of the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act stipulates that housing occupied by persons with disabilities or families in which one member has a disability must be adapted for access and use by persons with disabilities. The adaptations are made by local authorities and administrative bodies and other organizations responsible for managing housing stock with the participation of voluntary associations of persons with disabilities in accordance with the technical documents on architectural, urban planning and construction activities.

315. The Housing Code establishes the right to social housing, including for persons with disabilities (art. 111 (2) (1.5)–(1.9), (1.11) and (1.13) and (1) (11.3)). The local authorities and administrative bodies maintain a register of citizens in need of housing.

316. Pursuant to article 51 of the Housing Code, upon written request, persons with disabilities may be allocated housing near their place of work, the place of residence of their relatives or place of business of organizations that provide rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. Housing that does not meet this legal requirement may be allocated to persons with disabilities with their written consent.

317. Citizens aged 60 years or over, persons with disabilities and families in which one member has a disability or is aged 60 years or over may submit a written request to be housed on the lower floors (not above the second) or in a building with an elevator.

318. The Social Services Act seeks to ensure that persons with disabilities can live independently and be included in the community, in keeping with the Convention. The Act establishes that older persons and persons with disabilities are entitled to social services on

an inpatient, day patient, outpatient or emergency basis or at their homes or in a substitute family setting.

319. Various social services, including domestic, educational, general support, rehabilitation, personal care and assisted living services, are provided for persons with disabilities.

320. The conditions governing the provision by local social services centres of the social services included in the list of free and universal social services provided by State social service institutions and the rules and standards for the provision of such services depend on the financial situation and family circumstances of a person without the capacity to work.

321. Social services are provided free of charge to persons without the capacity to work who have no family members supporting them and who are on a low income; on a co-payment basis to persons without the capacity to work who have no family members supporting them and whose income is less than twice the minimum subsistence level; and on a full payment basis to other persons without the capacity to work.

322. The 146 local social services centres in Belarus have registered 47,800 persons with category I or II disabilities who have no family members supporting them or live apart from the family members who are supporting them (13.5 per cent of the total number of persons with disabilities in the country), 767,700 older persons who have no family members supporting them or live apart from the family members who are supporting them (37.6 per cent of the total number of older persons in the country) and 29,200 families raising children aged under 18 years. The local social services centres have 146 home visitor units, 156 day-care units for persons with disabilities and 155 assisted living units. In the first nine months of 2018, the persons with disabilities and older persons who were receiving the services of the local social services centres accounted for 678 of every 10,000 citizens without the capacity to work.

323. The social service system will be further improved with a view to ensuring that persons with disabilities are able to live independently in the local community, principally through the development of non-inpatient forms of social service provision for persons with disabilities and new living arrangements for citizens without the capacity to work (independent living facilities, guesthouses, short-term fostering, substitute families and so forth) and the promotion of competition in the provision of social services for persons with disabilities.

324. The Government has approved regulations on the procedure and conditions for the provision of social services through life estate agreements paid for from local budgets.

325. In 2017, the Social Services Act was amended to further enhance the effectiveness of the social services system and expand coverage for citizens in need, the State social procurement mechanism was enhanced, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection was made responsible for establishing standards for the content and quality of social and other services.

326. In 2017, legislative amendments were introduced to regulate the provision of social services to families with children. As of December 2017, low-cost babysitting services are also provided to families in which both parents have a category I or II disability or, in the case of single-parent families, in which the sole parent has such a disability.

327. Babysitting services are provided free of charge to single-parent families raising a child aged under 4 years with a disability and families raising two or more children with disabilities, one of which is aged under 4 years. Low-cost babysitting services are provided to other families raising children with disabilities aged under 18 years.

328. Short-term childcare or babysitting services are provided by 146 local social service centres and 2 municipal social service centres for families and children (in Homiel and Minsk).

329. In 2017, 2,235 families, including 197 families raising a child with a disability (0.7 per cent of all such families registered with the local social services centres), used childcare services.

Article 20

Personal mobility

330. The Government is taking measures to ensure personal mobility with the greatest possible independence for persons with disabilities, including by taking measures to remove barriers and create a barrier-free environment, providing persons with disabilities with assistive technology, accessible transport services, travel companion services, personal assistants and sign language interpreters and training specialist staff to work with persons with disabilities.

331. The measures taken to ensure the accessibility of social and transport infrastructure are described in the section of this report on article 9 of the Convention.

332. With a view to ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy freedom of movement, the State is taking steps to provide them with assistive technology to facilitate, among other things, their personal mobility. Each year, persons with disabilities receive over 60,000 different products to replace missing body parts or compensate for body functions that have been impaired or lost through illness or injury.

333. In line with their individual rehabilitation programmes or an opinion issued by the medical advisory board of a State health-care organization, persons with disabilities are provided with assistive technology from among those included in the State register (list) of government-approved assistive technology.

334. The State register lists 72 types of assistive technology, 49 of which are issued by the labour, employment and social protection bodies and 23 by State health-care organizations.

335. Persons with category I, II or III disabilities and children with disabilities aged under 18 years are provided with the appropriate assistive technology free of charge or on preferential terms paid for from the State and local budgets. They also have the right to have their rehabilitation and prosthetic devices serviced and repaired at the inpatient unit of the Belarusian Prosthetic and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Centre, a national unitary enterprise.

336. In 2017, following the ratification of the Convention, five new items of medical assistive technology were added to the list of assistive technology. There are plans to add new items to the State register in future.

337. In order to optimize the selection of assistive technology that facilitates the integration of persons with disabilities into society, including in the process of education and in the workplace, the Ministry of Health has prepared a set of rules for health-care facilities on the organization and procedure for the issuance of assistive technology, taking into account individual data, including anthropometrical observations and age.

338. Since 2017, it has been possible to purchase seats for wheelchair users on the corporate website of Belarusian Railway.

339. The “social taxi” transport service is another form of social support for persons with disabilities. It is operated by local authorities and administrative bodies in accordance with the Local Government and Self-Government Act. In 2017, this service was provided by the municipal executive committees of Homiel, Hrodna and Minsk.

340. Reduced public transport fares for persons with category I and II disabilities are also helping to increase their personal mobility in accordance with the Act on State Social Benefits, Rights and Guarantees for Particular Categories of Citizens.

341. In addition to the measures undertaken to ensure unimpeded access for persons with disabilities to public transport services, the State is taking steps to facilitate travel in private vehicles for such persons.

342. In accordance with national technical laws and regulations, every parking area, including those near retail and service facilities and medical, sports, cultural and entertainment venues, must allocate parking spaces for special vehicles belonging to persons with disabilities. These spaces must not be occupied by other vehicles. Persons with disabilities can park their special vehicles free of charge (Technical Code of Practice

No. 45-3.01-116-2008 entitled “Urban planning: residential areas – planning and building standards”).

343. The unlawful parking of a vehicle in a space reserved for persons with disabilities is punishable by a fine under the Code of Administrative Offences (art. 18.22).

344. Persons with category I or II disabilities who own a transport vehicle are entitled to a 50 per cent discount on the State fee applied to permits to drive vehicles on roads (unless they are fully exempted from payment of the State fee) (Tax Code, art. 250 (8)).

345. In Belarus, persons with category I disabilities who have locomotor or visual impairments are accompanied by a personal assistant when they travel to and from educational institutions, workplaces, local authorities and administrative bodies, legal clinics, social infrastructure and health-care, service, trade and other organizations in order to deal with any issues that arise, complete paperwork, realize their rights and interests and so forth.

Article 21

Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information

346. In Belarus, all persons are guaranteed freedom of opinion, belief and expression (Constitution, art. 33).

347. The Constitution establishes the right of all citizens to associate freely. The State guarantees the right to assemble, to hold meetings, to organize street processions, to demonstrate and to picket when such activities do not disturb public order or impinge upon the rights of others. The procedure for holding such events is determined by law (Constitution, arts. 35 and 36).

348. Pursuant to article 37 of the Constitution, Belarusian citizens have the right to take part in decisions on State affairs directly or through their freely elected representatives. Direct participation of citizens in managing the affairs of society and the State is ensured through referendums, debates on draft laws and issues of national and local significance, and by other means provided for by the law. Under the procedure established by law, citizens of Belarus take part in the discussion of issues affecting the State and society in the national and local assemblies.

349. Belarusian citizens, including persons with disabilities, have the right to vote and be elected to State bodies on the basis of universal, equal and direct or indirect suffrage by secret ballot (Constitution, art. 38).

350. In addition, persons with disabilities are able to express their opinions through the more than 80 voluntary organizations that they have established, and workers with disabilities through trade unions.

351. Each year, 1,104 persons with hearing impairments receive a maximum of 36 hours of sign language interpretation at State organizations. The Belarusian Society of Deaf Persons, a voluntary association, provides sign language interpretation services at these organizations for a further 5,893 persons. These services enable persons with hearing disabilities to converse with others, obtain necessary information and make decisions regarding training, work and the protection and realization of their rights and interests.

352. With due regard to the importance of information technologies and the Internet as a global source of information, the Government has included mobile phones (smartphones) with screen readers or a navigation function or both for persons with visual impairments in the State register.

353. Pursuant to a government decision on certain issues concerning the websites of State bodies and organizations, the websites of State bodies or organizations must be available in special versions (support special technology) for persons with visual impairments and be compatible with various browsers. This standard entered into force on 1 January 2019.

354. In 2018, a website was launched to provide information on social protection in Belarus. It contains the text of laws and regulations on social protection, information on pensions, benefits, social payments and the services provided by the social protection bodies and practical information about the social protection bodies, such as addresses,

telephone numbers and opening hours. Users of the website can also make appointments and send electronic communications to any entity in the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection system (<http://psz.gov.by>).

Article 22

Respect for privacy

355. The Constitution and the country's civil, labour, family, administrative, criminal and criminal procedure legislation guarantee the right to privacy of all persons, including persons with disabilities.

356. The State guarantees everyone the right to property and facilitates its acquisition. Owners have the right to own, use and dispose of their property both individually and jointly with others. The inviolability of property and the right to inherit it are protected by law. Legally acquired property is protected by the State. The State promotes and safeguards savings and guarantees deposits (Constitution, art. 44).

357. Chapter 20 of the Civil Code guarantees the right of persons with disabilities not to be arbitrarily deprived of their property.

358. Special transport vehicles for persons with disabilities may not be seized by court order (Penalties Enforcement Code, annex, para. 9).

359. Article 28 of the Constitution establishes the right of all persons to protection against unlawful interference in their personal lives, including interference with correspondence or telephone and other communications and outrages upon honour or dignity.

360. Belarusian citizens have a right to housing. This right is ensured by expanding the stock of State and private housing and helping citizens to acquire housing. The State and local self-government provide housing to citizens in need of social protection, including persons with disabilities, free of charge or at an affordable cost in accordance with the law. No one may be arbitrarily deprived of housing (Constitution, art. 48).

361. In Belarus, the inviolability of the home and other lawful property is guaranteed. No one has the right to enter a citizen's home or other lawful property against his or her will, except on lawful grounds (Constitution, art. 29).

362. Citizens may be evicted from residential housing only on the grounds set out in the Housing Code and other legislative acts (art. 84). Housing law establishes additional safeguards for persons with category I or II disabilities.

363. The Population Register Act, which is currently in force, protects the personal data of individuals, including persons with disabilities.

Article 23

Respect for home and the family

364. In Belarus, support for the family is a national priority. According to the Constitution, the State protects marriage, the family, motherhood, fatherhood and childhood (art. 32).

365. The Head of State and the Government attach great importance to strengthening the institution of the family, promoting family values and State support for families with children.

366. The Presidential Decree on the Approval of the Basic State Family Policy Guidelines in Belarus identifies the following main aims of State family policy: improving the socioeconomic conditions of the family so that it may fulfil its reproductive, economic and child-rearing functions; and strengthening the moral foundations of the family and raising its profile in society.

367. Measures are being taken to support families under the State Programme on Public Health and Demographic Security for the period 2016–2020. Such matters are also

addressed in other State programmes and national plans (such as the National Plan for the Advancement of Children and the Protection of Their Rights and the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality).

368. Families in which a child or parent has a disability are legally entitled to guarantees and benefits.

369. The Marriage and Family Code establishes the principle of the equality of the rights of spouses in the family. All issues regarding marital and family relations must be decided by the spouses jointly, by mutual consent and on the basis of equality.

370. The age of marriage is 18 years for men and women. The age of marriage may be lowered by a maximum of three years if there are valid reasons. Belarusian legislation contains a list of persons who may not marry. For example, two persons may not marry if at least one of them has been declared by a court to lack dispositive capacity.

371. Disability is no obstacle to the conclusion of a marriage. All Belarusian citizens of marriageable age may choose a spouse and marry freely and without restriction.

372. Under Belarusian law, persons with disabilities are not subject to any restrictions in such matters as paternity, maternity and family planning services.

373. Child adoption matters are decided by the courts. The Marriage and Family Code lists the categories of person who may not adopt a child. They include persons recognized by a court as lacking or partially lacking dispositive capacity and persons who cannot exercise parental rights for health reasons. The list of illnesses that make a person ineligible to adopt a child or enter into a tutorship, guardianship or foster care arrangement is compiled by the competent health-care authority.

374. In 2017, 548 children were adopted in Belarus, 24 of them by foreign nationals, and Belarusian families adopted 13 children with disabilities.

375. There are 263 children with disabilities under tutorship or guardianship or in foster care with Belarusian families.

376. The adoption of a child is a confidential matter protected by law. Separate statistics are not maintained on the adoption of children with disabilities, and claims filed by persons with disabilities relating to adoption are not monitored.

377. Pursuant to article 24 of the Health Care Act, maternity is protected and promoted by the State. Women are guaranteed inpatient medical observation and care in State health-care facilities during pregnancy, labour and after birth.

378. Pursuant to article 22 of the Health Care Act, Belarusian citizens, including persons with disabilities, are guaranteed free consultations regarding family planning, the medical and psychological aspects of marital and family relationships and medical genetic testing in State health-care facilities with a view to preventing any hereditary diseases from being passed on.

379. In accordance with the Marriage and Family Code, a parent living apart from the child has the right to have contact with the child, to be involved in the child's upbringing and to participate in decisions on the child's education and other matters of importance to the child. The parent with whom the child is living must not prevent his or her contact with the other parent, provided that such contact does not cause physical or mental harm to the health of the child and to his or her moral development (Marriage and Family Code, art. 77).

380. The measures taken by Belarus to ensure that not a single child is separated from his or her parents on grounds of the disability of either the child or one or both parents include strengthening the legal basis for the child's right to live and be brought up in a family, to have contact with his or her parents and other relatives and to express opinions (Rights of the Child Act, chap. 2).

381. Unless otherwise provided by law, a child is entitled to learn about his or her origins and biological parents and to maintain links with his or her family – if the family has agreed to this – even if parental rights have ceased to apply in respect of the child. The child has the right to maintain contact with both parents, even if the parents live abroad.

382. Legal provisions cover the ways in which children left without parental care may be cared for. Such children are placed in a family (for adoption, under tutorship or

guardianship, for long-term fostering or under a short-term fostering arrangement) or, if no such possibility exists, they may be temporarily placed in a residential children's home until they can be placed with a family (Marriage and Family Code, art. 118).

383. With the aim of further promoting the role of the family in the social integration process for persons with disabilities, the State is developing ways to offer support to such families and help them to work with social services, improving the system for training long-term foster carers and guardians, and encouraging the introduction of short-term fostering and substitute families.

Article 24

Education

384. The Education Code sets out the main areas of State education policy for persons with special physical or psychological needs, including children with disabilities:

- Ensuring their access to education at all levels, in accordance with their health status and cognitive skills and functioning
- Creating special conditions for their education
- Creating the necessary conditions to meet individual educational needs and the requirements of society and the State with respect to the development of the individual and the training of qualified personnel

385. Persons with disabilities have the same rights as other students. In addition, the Education Code establishes the right to:

- Special conditions for education, with due regard to particular psychological and physical needs, and the provision of special education
- Free psychological, medical and educational assessments at State special education and rehabilitation centres
- Free special education for students with physical or mental impairments or both in State education institutions that run special education programmes
- Transport to educational institutions in specially equipped vehicles
- Free use of textbooks and study materials
- Free accommodation and meals in special education establishments

386. In Belarus, there are 156,072 children with special physical or psychological needs, including 99,692 preschool-age and 56,380 school-age children. The number of children certified as having disabilities is 12,065.

387. In the 2018/19 academic year, there were 238 special education institutions: 141 special education and rehabilitation centres, 47 special preschools and 50 special schools or boarding schools.

388. Over the past 10 years, the number of special schools or boarding schools has fallen by 38.3 per cent, from 81 in the 2006/07 academic year to 50 in the 2018/19 academic year.

389. Belarus has a network of educational institutions that offer integrated education and learning. At the preschool level, there are 2,887 special or integrated education and learning groups. At the general secondary level, there are 5,023 special and integrated education and training classes.

390. Coverage of special education and remedial education stood at 99.8 per cent. By 2017, the proportion of students receiving their education in an integrated and inclusive setting was 86.2 per cent.

391. A system is in place to provide comprehensive early intervention so that childhood developmental disorders can be identified at the earliest possible opportunity and work with children and their families can begin as soon as possible. There are 138 comprehensive early intervention offices operating through special education and rehabilitation centres at which assistance is provided to around 1,400 children aged under 3 years each year.

392. Children with minor impairments receive remedial education services at 3,422 remedial education centres at preschool and general secondary education institutions.

393. Sign language has been added to the curriculum used at schools for students with hearing impairments.

394. Preschool, general secondary and special education institutions provide personalized educational support to students with autism.

395. Efforts are under way to facilitate access to vocational, specialized secondary and higher education for persons with disabilities.

396. The students enrolled in the 2017/18 academic year included:

- 627 persons with disabilities, including 359 persons with special physical or psychological needs, at vocational education institutions
- 644 persons with disabilities at specialized secondary education institutions
- 915 persons with disabilities at higher education institutions at the undergraduate level, 771 of them on on-site (day) courses and 144 on distance-learning courses

397. In accordance with the rules on acceptance to vocational education programmes, which were approved by government decision, the selection panel must take into account any impairments that persons with special physical or psychological needs might have when deciding how they are to take the entrance tests.

398. Where medically advisable, children with disabilities and persons with category I or II disabilities who have a score of no lower than 4 out of 10 on their education certificate are accepted to the vocational education programme for a particular area of study, excluding those for which the number of candidates per place in the competitive examination held the previous year was five or more, without having to enter a competitive examination. They must nevertheless take the entrance tests for the area of study and achieve a passing score.

399. If two candidates for a vocational education programme have equal scores, priority is given to children with disabilities and persons with category I, II or III disabilities. Students with special physical or psychological needs who are temporarily or permanently unable to attend an educational institution are given the option of home-based vocational education for certain areas of study and qualifications.

400. Pursuant to a presidential decree on the rules governing eligibility for higher education at the undergraduate level and specialized secondary education, if education in their chosen area of study is not contraindicated, children with disabilities aged over 18 years and persons with category I or II disabilities may enter competitive examinations for entry to higher education and specialized secondary education programmes paid for from the budget on a distance-learning or on-site (evening class) basis, regardless of whether they are working in the field of the chosen area of study. Applicants with visual, hearing or locomotor impairments may take the examination for entry to specialized secondary education institutions and higher education institutions without having to submit central testing certificates. If an applicant cannot appear in person before the selection panel for a valid reason, for example illness, the documents may be entrusted to a representative. If two candidates for a specialized secondary education programme have equal scores, priority is given to persons with category I or II disabilities, children with disabilities aged under 18 years and persons with category III disabilities.

401. The Code prescribes smaller class sizes for vocational education programmes for persons with special physical or psychological needs, states that vocational and social rehabilitation centres may be set up for persons with special physical or psychological needs and provides for social grants for persons with physical or psychological development issues who master the content of a vocational, specialized secondary or higher education programme.

402. In May 2018, at WorldSkills Belarus 2018, the third national vocational skills competition for workers, specialists and students receiving vocational, specialized secondary or higher education, a panel entitled “DeafSkills” was organized for persons with hearing impairments.

403. In 2018, four higher education institutions accepted Belarusian citizens with disabilities to distance-learning courses.

404. Amendments relating to inclusive education were introduced to a bill to amend the Education Code. A framework for the development of inclusive education for persons with physical or psychological development issues and action plan for its implementation over the period 2016–2020 were also approved.

405. Maxim Tank Belarusian State Pedagogical University has had an inclusive education institute since 2016 and a national inclusive education resource centre since 2017.

406. The curricula used at higher education institutions to train teachers for most areas of study include a module on the theory and practice of special education.

Article 25

Health

407. In accordance with the Constitution, Belarusian citizens, including persons with disabilities, have a right to protection of health, including treatment free of charge in State health-care facilities, without distinction as to their sex or age. The State creates the conditions in which medical care is accessible to all citizens. The right to protection of health is also ensured through the development of physical culture and sport, measures to clean up the environment, the possibility of using health-resort facilities and improved worker safety.

408. Regardless of gender or social differences, all Belarusian citizens have a right to accessible medical care. This right is realized through:

- Medical care provided free of charge at State health-care facilities on the basis of the State minimum social standards for health care
- Medical care paid for by individuals, legal entities and other sources, as permitted by law, and provided in State and non-State health-care facilities and by sole traders who provide medical care in accordance with the procedure established by law
- Medical care provided in accordance voluntary health insurance schemes
- Accessible medicines
- Medical assessments

409. The Health Care Act regulates the main areas of State health-care policy in Belarus.

410. The State Programme on Public Health and Demographic Security for the period 2016–2020 and the disability prevention and rehabilitation subprogramme of the State Programme on Social Protection and Employment Promotion for the period 2016–2020 are both currently being implemented in the health-care sector.

411. Medical rehabilitation assessment boards carry out sociomedical assessments, which are multidisciplinary in nature. The boards have the right to request advice from specialist doctors and representatives of labour, employment, social protection, insurance and other organizations and to provide assistance to local authorities and administrative bodies and health-care and other organizations on issues that fall within their competence.

412. Belarus has seven State medical rehabilitation assessment boards (one in each province and one in the city of Minsk), which operate a system of primary, specialized inter-district, district and municipal boards, central boards and other branch or separate units that carry out the functions of the medical rehabilitation assessment boards.

413. The medical rehabilitation assessment boards also operate vocational rehabilitation clinics, which are set up with a view to providing:

- Vocational guidance to help patients to identify the most appropriate type and conditions of work and develop an individual rehabilitation programme
- Vocational assessments and guidance to help children with disabilities aged 14 to 18 years to choose a profession in which to train, taking into account the state of their health and the chances of finding future employment

- Analyses of the working conditions in specific workplaces on the basis of submitted documents, as well as workplace analyses aimed at determining ideal working conditions, developing individual rehabilitation programmes and programmes for the rehabilitation of victims of industrial accidents or occupational injuries and determining the degree of loss of work capacity in the circumstances established by law

414. Belarus currently has 12 central and 75 primary medical rehabilitation assessment boards carrying out sociomedical assessments, which ensures their accessibility to the public. The practice of assessing patients with severely reduced mobility or a severely reduced capacity to care for themselves at their homes has become more frequent.

415. A legal and regulatory framework for sociomedical assessments has been approved and is constantly being enhanced.

416. The government decision on the approval of regulations governing the procedure for submitting documents to demonstrate eligibility for State social benefits, rights and guarantees for particular categories of citizens specifies the type of disability certificate to be issued to persons with disabilities, including children aged under 18 years, and to persons who acquired a disability as a result of an unlawful act, alcohol, drug or other toxic substance abuse or self-harm.

417. Depending on their health status and medical indications, patients receive the following forms of medical care: primary medical care, specialized medical care, high-tech medical care, sociomedical assistance and palliative care.

418. Without distinction as to their gender, Belarusian citizens, including persons with disabilities, receive medical care in health-care organizations on the basis of clinical protocols and medical care guidelines, in line with available diagnostic and treatment options.

419. When Belarusian citizens are not able to receive the appropriate medical care in Belarus, they are sent abroad to receive it (the Health Care Act, art. 14).

420. In order to provide timely medical assistance and eliminate discrimination, Belarusian citizens with disabilities are treated at State health-care facilities near their place of residence or place of stay. They may also be treated at institutions near their place of work, study or service, where there are departmental health-care organizations. All persons with disabilities have an equal right to receive medical care at State health-care facilities away from their place of residence or place of stay. These measures ensure that health-care services are as accessible as possible to persons with disabilities, thereby realizing their right to the highest attainable standard of health in the local community and at no cost.

421. A raft of measures has been developed to grant persons with disabilities equal privileges with respect to medical care, including medical rehabilitation on an inpatient or outpatient basis and health-resort treatment, without discrimination on the ground of gender. Persons with disabilities receive all forms of qualified medical care, medicines and other medical products free of charge or on preferential terms, as defined by law (the Act on State Social Benefits, Rights and Guarantees for Particular Categories of Citizens).

422. Persons with category I or II disabilities are entitled to a 90 per cent discount on the cost of medicines and dressing materials, while persons with category III disabilities are entitled to a 50 per cent discount on the cost of products relating to their principal disability.

423. Medicines are provided free of charge in accordance with the list of illnesses that make citizens eligible to receive, free of charge, medicines prescribed by a physician from the list of essential medicines, during outpatient treatment, and medical nutrition (Council of Ministers order on certain issues relating to the free and subsidized provision of medicines and dressing materials for specific categories of citizens).

424. The Act on State Social Benefits, Rights and Guarantees for Particular Categories of Citizens regulates benefits for health-resort treatment.

425. Persons with category I or II disabilities have the right to treatment at a health resort free of charge, regardless of the cause of their disability, as do other vulnerable groups.

426. Under Belarusian law, the frequency with which citizens, including those with disabilities, have check-ups with their doctor is determined by a medical assessment. In all

regions of the country, local laws and regulations (orders) have been drafted to regulate the work of the community therapeutic care service. Approval has been given lists indicating how frequently patients belonging to particular categories are to be visited, regulations on the procedure for visits by a community nurse or doctor's assistant in a health-care district, guidelines for home visits by medical personnel of the community service and community nurse visit report templates.

427. Patients with category I disabilities are examined, and assessed by the medical rehabilitation assessment boards, at their homes. Persons with category I disabilities who live in rural areas undergo medical rehabilitation on an inpatient basis at least twice a year.

428. In order to realize at a national level the general principle that medical care should be accessible, including for persons with disabilities, and without distinction as to sex or age, health-care services are provided to persons with disabilities as near to the place at which they live as possible, including in rural areas. In such areas, persons with disabilities can access obstetric units, rural outpatient clinics, general practice outpatient clinics and rural community hospitals.

429. The State guarantees the provision of medical rehabilitation for persons with disabilities at State health-care organizations in accordance with the procedure established by law (Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Act, art. 25), clinical protocols and the individual rehabilitation programme of the person concerned.

430. Each year, on the basis of medical advice, over 20,000 persons with disabilities are sent to recreational or health facilities, their stays paid for through State social insurance or the national budget.

Article 26

Habilitation and rehabilitation

431. Rehabilitation and social support of citizens affected by any illness or injury is one of the key priorities of State social policy.

432. The State policy of Belarus on the prevention of disabilities and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities is regulated by the Prevention of Disabilities and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities Act.

433. Rehabilitation of persons with disabilities covers a range of measures aimed at helping persons with disabilities in engaging in an optimal level of physical, intellectual and social activity and supporting them through the provision of the necessary resources, services, information and other means to ensure a better quality of life and greater independence, including medical, vocational, employment and social rehabilitation.

434. During the rehabilitation process, persons with disabilities have the right to equal, respectful and non-discriminatory treatment from persons involved in the process, full and reliable information on their rights and opportunities and on the nature, quality and conditions of receiving and conducting rehabilitation, and the involvement of representatives of voluntary associations of persons with disabilities at any stage of rehabilitation and other rights.

435. The necessary medical, vocational, employment and social rehabilitation measures are offered to persons with disabilities on the basis of an individual programme for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, which is drawn up by medical rehabilitation expert boards. The individual programme is contained in a document that defines the specific scope, types and time frames of rehabilitation and is binding on the relevant State authorities, together with organizations and small business owners engaged in the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

436. The programme form is approved by the Ministry of Health in consultation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and Ministry of Education and consists of three sections: a medical rehabilitation programme; a vocational and employment rehabilitation programme; and a social rehabilitation programme. When drawing up an individual programme, doctors on the expert board inform the person with disabilities (or legal representative) about his or her rights under the law.

437. The implementation of the programme and the quality of the rehabilitation are monitored by the relevant committees and health, education, labour, employment and social protection departments of local executive and administrative bodies (Prevention of Disabilities and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities Act, art. 41).

438. The possibility for persons with disabilities or their legal representatives to refuse rehabilitation entirely or part of the rehabilitation programme is regulated by article 9 of the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, which, in accordance with the Convention, requires the free consent of persons with disabilities to participate in habilitation and rehabilitation programmes and services.

439. Continuous efforts are being made to improve the system for the rehabilitation of patients and persons with disabilities; health-care organizations are equipped with modern rehabilitation equipment, including ground-breaking equipment. New methods and technologies for the medical rehabilitation of patients and the persons with disabilities are being developed and successfully introduced into health-care practice.

440. Medical rehabilitation services operate throughout the country, at the inter-district, municipal, regional and national levels.

441. Rehabilitation is carried out on an inpatient and outpatient basis:

- At the national level, in national health centres and hospitals
- At regional level, in provincial hospitals and medical rehabilitation centres (or hospitals)
- At city (or district) level, in city (or district) hospitals (centres) and polyclinics

442. A phased approach to medical rehabilitation has been adopted in Belarus, including an inpatient treatment and rehabilitation phase, an inpatient early medical rehabilitation phase, an outpatient phase, a home phase of medical rehabilitation and a follow-up inpatient medical rehabilitation phase.

443. The procedure for providing medical rehabilitation in outpatient, inpatient and day-care facilities, and outside health-care organizations, is governed by the regulations of the Ministry of Health, which makes it possible to provide for the rehabilitation not only of persons with disabilities but also of patients at risk of developing disabilities.

444. As of 1 January 2018, 326 medical rehabilitation departments (including departments of organizations under national supervision) were operating in the country's State health organizations, including 96 inpatient and 230 outpatient departments.

445. Inpatient medical rehabilitation for adults is provided in 59 medical rehabilitation departments (2,706 beds) and for children in 37 departments (1,952 beds). The main contingent of adult patients in need of inpatient medical rehabilitation are those with circulatory system diseases, injuries, musculoskeletal and connective tissue disorders, nervous system disorders and cancer; the major contingent of child patients in need of such care are those with nervous system disorders, musculoskeletal and connective tissue disorders, injuries, respiratory diseases and congenital anomalies (congenital anomalies of the circulatory system, central nervous system and urinary system and congenital anomalies and deformities of the musculoskeletal system).

446. Outpatient medical rehabilitation is provided to patients in 230 outpatient clinics (48 clinics for children and 182 for adults, with 61 providing rehabilitation services to both adults and children).

447. At national level, medical rehabilitation is carried out in national health organizations.

448. Regional hospitals (centres) for medical rehabilitation operate in every province of the country. There are 25 hospitals (centres) for medical rehabilitation in the country, including 9 for adults and 16 for children.

449. There are 18 district (or inter-district) multidisciplinary medical rehabilitation departments at the district level, including 17 for adults and 1 for children.

450. State policy on the prevention of disabilities and the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities is carried out by developing and implementing programmes for the prevention

of impairment of body functions and structures caused by illness or injury, the prevention and reduction of the incidence of disability and the establishment and development of a rehabilitation system. Previous State programmes on the prevention of disabilities and the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities have made a significant contribution to addressing the serious difficulties faced by persons with disabilities owing to dedicated, comprehensive work towards their rehabilitation.

451. In 2018, with a view to implementing the Convention and in accordance with the relevant National Plan of Action, and also with the schedule for the preparation of new bills for 2018, draft legislation aimed at amending the laws of Belarus on matters relating to the social protection of persons with disabilities was approved by a Presidential Decree; the legislation will address shortcomings in the law by introducing the concept of “discrimination on the basis of disability”; it will also aim to introduce a new understanding of “habilitation”, “reasonable accommodation” and “universal design”, promote the development of a barrier-free living environment for persons with disabilities, ensure accessibility of services in the area of health, education, transport and information and protect the rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities.

452. As a result of rehabilitation and treatment measures in the period 2015–2017, 13,632 people over the age of 18 were no longer classified as persons with disabilities, and 10,195 people, owing to the partial restoration of impaired functions, were transferred to a different disability category (from category I to II or III, or from category II to III).

453. One of the elements of social rehabilitation of persons with disabilities is social services, including the provision of daily assistance to them.

454. The organization of social services for persons with disabilities by the local social service centres is described in paragraph 355 of this report.

455. Persons who require constant care are provided with services in institutional social care facilities. There are 80 residential homes for the older persons and persons with disabilities in Belarus, with 19,000 residents, including 49 psychoneurological residential homes (with 13,900 persons), 22 general residential homes for older persons and persons with disabilities (3,700 persons), and 9 residential homes for children with disabilities with special needs (1,400 persons).

456. Social services for the persons with disabilities in day-care social service facilities and also assisted living services are provided free of charge by local social service centres in accordance with the established standards and requirements.

457. The conditions for the provision by the local social service centres of home care services included in a list within the framework of the established standards and requirements depend on the financial situation and composition of the family of the person with disabilities.

458. Social services are provided to single low-income persons with disabilities free of charge. Single persons with disabilities with incomes under 200 per cent of the minimum subsistence level are provided services on partial payment terms and others on full payment terms.

459. There are 11,600 social workers in the local centres providing home-based social services to persons with disabilities and older persons.

460. The State ensures that persons with disabilities living in both urban and rural areas are provided with assisted living services in accordance with individual rehabilitation programmes, including the services of an assistant to accompany persons with category I disabilities with locomotor or visual impairments or both, for up to 40 hours a month, the services of an assistant for single persons with category I and II disabilities who are living on their own and have intellectual impairments, for up to 60 hours a month, and the services of a sign language interpreter for persons with hearing impairments, for up to 36 hours a year.

Article 27

Work and employment

461. A legal framework has been created in Belarus to establish State policy and guarantees of the labour rights of persons with disabilities. It is based on the Constitution, the Labour Code and other basic legislation. The rights and guarantees enshrined in the basic legislation fully apply to persons with disabilities and are in line with article 27 (1) of the Convention.

462. The Constitution and the Labour Code lay down the foundations for the legal regulation of labour relations, which apply, without exception, to persons with disabilities, including the right to work, the right to choose an occupation, type of employment and job in accordance with their vocation, abilities, education and vocational training and also the right to healthy and safe working conditions, guaranteed fair remuneration for work and judicial and other labour protection.

463. In the event of unemployment, persons with disabilities are guaranteed training in new professions or further training, subject to societal needs.

464. The necessary legal conditions have been created in Belarus for persons with disabilities to exercise their right to work. Over 65,000 persons with disabilities are employed, or 32.6 per cent of the total number of persons of working age.

465. In accordance with their capabilities and professional training, citizens of Belarus have the right to equal access to any position in State bodies (Constitution, art. 39). Grounds for refusal of admission to the civil service are provided in the Civil Service Act. In particular, a citizen may not be a civil servant if he or she is declared to have no or limited dispositive capacity, or if the person has a medically certified illness included in the government list of illnesses that prevent the performance of official duties.

466. The prohibition of employment discrimination established in article 14 of the Labour Code applies in full to persons with disabilities. Discrimination is prohibited, namely the restriction of labour rights or the granting of any benefit on the basis of sex, race, ethnic or social origin, language, religious or political views, membership or non-membership of trade unions or other voluntary associations, property or official status, or physical or mental disabilities that do not hinder the performance of the work duties concerned.

467. In order to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment on the open labour market, the Employment Act (art. 11) and the Prevention of Disabilities and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities Act (arts. 27–28 and 30–32) establish a system of additional guarantees in the field of employment assistance, as follows:

- Reservation of posts for the recruitment of persons with disabilities
- Creation of additional jobs and specialized organizations
- Provision of career guidance services
- Organization of occupational training, retraining and advanced training of persons with disabilities
- Vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities
- Preparation of persons with disabilities for work

468. Persons with disabilities have the right to work for employers under ordinary working conditions and also in specialized organizations, workshops and sites.

469. Employers are prohibited from refusing to conclude an employment contract or to promote an employee and from terminating an employment contract or transferring an employee with disabilities to another post without his or her consent on the grounds of disability.

470. Article 22 of the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act and article 287 of the Labour Code establish entitlements in labour relations for persons with disabilities so that they can exercise their labour rights on an equal footing with others.

471. The working hours of persons with category I or II disabilities have been reduced to no more than 35 hours a week. At the same time, they receive the same pay as employees in corresponding occupations and positions who work standard working hours.

472. Persons with disabilities may be recruited for overtime work, night work, work on public and other holidays, and work at weekends only with their consent and on condition that they are not prohibited from doing such work by the individual rehabilitation programme.

473. Persons with disabilities may travel on official business only with their consent.

474. The employer has the right to reduce performance standards for persons with disabilities depending on their health condition.

475. Workers with disabilities are given preference when staff redundancies are made, provided that their labour productivity and qualifications are the same as others.

476. Persons with disabilities working in specialized organizations, workshops and sites that employ persons with disabilities have a priority entitlement to be retained at work regardless of their productivity and qualifications.

477. Persons with disabilities who have worked for an employer prior to retirement retain the right, on an equal footing with others, to health-care services, housing, vouchers for wellness and preventive care centres and other social services and guarantees provided for in collective agreements and accords on an equal basis with their employees.

478. Under articles 9.15 and 9.16 of the Code of Administrative Offences, sole traders who fail to fulfil their obligation to create jobs, including specialized jobs for persons with disabilities, are liable to a fine of between 20 and 50 base units and corporations of up to 100 base units. An unfounded refusal to recruit a person with disabilities referred by the labour, employment or social protection authorities for a position that has been reserved for persons with disabilities is punishable by a fine of between 20 and 50 base units.

479. The Employment Act provides State guarantees for unemployed persons, including free assistance in finding employment, free career guidance, vocational training, retraining, further training, unemployment benefits, training grants under the direction of the labour, employment and social protection authorities and financial assistance for unemployed persons and their dependants. This law also provides for assistance in relocating unemployed persons and their family members to a new place of residence and work, free medical examinations when they are recruited for work and job placement training, community service job opportunities and assistance for starting up businesses in agritourism or gaining practical work experience.

480. All services provided by the State Employment Service to unemployed persons are accessible to unemployed persons with disabilities in accordance with the individual rehabilitation programmes.

481. Every year about 4,500 persons with disabilities register as unemployed and apply to the State Employment Service for assistance in finding work. Over the past five years, the number of registered persons with disabilities has reached 22,500. In 2017, 4,680 persons with disabilities were registered.

482. In 2013–2017, job placement assistance was provided to 11,300 persons with disabilities and, in 2017, to 2,280 persons with disabilities.

483. Persons with disabilities are given access to vocational training as a matter of priority. Furthermore, as part of the implementation of measures to help people to find employment, the costs associated with organizing and carrying out the training process for unemployed persons with disabilities directly in educational establishments and living and travel costs are covered. Study grants are provided to unemployed persons during the training period and, if necessary, financial assistance. In 2013–2017, 1,400 persons with disabilities were provided with vocational training, including 301 persons with disabilities in 2017.

484. With a view to the rehabilitation and subsequent employment of persons with disabilities, the country has developed a process to help new employees with disabilities to become integrated into the workplace, which is carried out in their existing profession in

accordance with an individual rehabilitation plan and may last, depending on the person's capabilities, from 6 months to 1 year.

485. In the past five years, 2,600 persons with disabilities have undergone this integration process and employers have been compensated for the labour costs incurred, including 549 persons with disabilities in 2017.

486. The labour, employment and social protection authorities provide guidance and practical assistance to support the business initiatives of persons with disabilities. In 2013–2017, 136 persons with disabilities received subsidies to start their own business, including 23 persons with disabilities in 2017.

487. The country has a system of State support for businesses that employ persons with disabilities, including incentives for organizations and employers to create additional posts for person with disabilities, paid out of the State extrabudgetary social protection fund of Belarus.

488. A national job vacancies databank is freely available at the web page of the State Employment Service to inform citizens of employment opportunities on the open labour market (www.gsz.gov.by). The web page also offers job seekers the opportunity to fill in an electronic questionnaire/curriculum vitae for further review by employers.

489. In Belarus, measures are being taken to expand opportunities for persons with disabilities to receive vocational training and subsequent employment. The Education Code provides for job placement as follows:

- For children with disabilities up to the age of 18 and persons with category I or II disabilities, taking account of their state of health, at their parents' or spouse's place of residence or, with their consent, other available place of work
- For persons with a parent or spouse with category I or II disabilities or a child with disabilities, at their request and, if possible, in the area of the parents', spouse's or child's place of residence

490. In accordance with the order on the procedures for forecasting human resource requirements for the submission of requests for the training of specialists, workers and officers, confirmed by order of the Government on certain issues relating to requests for staff training, the educational authorities that carry out vocational training programmes, in coordination with the Ministry of Education, up to 15 August, may set specific admission targets for particular disciplines in full-time education within the limits established by their target figures when information is received from employers that specific human resource needs have arisen or when persons with special psychological or physical needs, children with disabilities and persons with category I, II or III disabilities are receiving vocational training. The needs specified are determined on the basis of information from organizations that are recruiting staff on their current human resource requirements or on application to the admissions board for vocational training by persons with special psychological or physical needs, children with disabilities or persons with category I, II or III disabilities.

491. In Belarus, persons with disabilities exercise their trade union rights on an equal footing with other citizens without any discrimination. In accordance with article 41 of the Constitution, persons with disabilities, like all citizens, are guaranteed the right to form trade unions and conclude collective agreements and accords and the right to strike.

492. The right of all workers, including workers with disabilities, without exception, to the protection of economic and social rights and interests together with the right to form trade unions, to conclude collective agreements and accords and to strike is guaranteed by article 11 of the Labour Code.

493. The Trade Unions Act, which regulates general provisions on trade unions and their activities, their fundamental rights and guarantees of the exercise of these rights, provides for the right of citizens to freely create trade unions of their choosing and to join trade unions in accordance with their statutes. The rules governing trade union activity contained in international agreements to which Belarus is a party are part of the legislation on trade unions in force in the country.

494. A system of social partnership has been established and is effectively functioning in the country, enabling trade unions and their associations to participate in the development

and implementation of the State's social and economic policy and to take into account the interests of various segments and groups of society in the social and labour sphere.

495. The current legislation and system of social partnership has facilitated the introduction of collective bargaining and the conclusion of accords and collective agreements. As of 1 January 2018, there were 572 accords and 19,102 collective agreements in force in Belarus.

Article 28

Adequate standard of living and social protection

496. In accordance with article 21 of the Constitution, every person enjoys the right to a decent standard of living, including appropriate food, clothing and housing, and steady improvements in the conditions necessary for achieving this standard.

497. Article 31 of the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act guarantees social protection for persons with disabilities from the State in the form of cash transfers (pensions, allowances, State subsistence allowances) and the provision of assistive technology, including wheelchairs, prosthetic and orthopaedic products, special-format publications, sound amplification and signalling devices and also social and household services.

498. The terms and conditions and procedures for the provision of pensions, allowances and State subsistence allowances to persons with disabilities are laid down in legislative acts.

499. Assistive technology to persons with disabilities is provided in accordance with the State register (list) of assistive technologies in the manner prescribed by the Council of Ministers of Belarus.

500. Local councils of deputies and executive and administrative bodies may provide persons with disabilities within their jurisdiction with pension top-ups paid out of local budget funds for every type of State pension and other means of social support for persons with disabilities and take other decisions to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities and improve their living standards.

501. One of the approaches established in national legislation is accessibility to pensions for persons with disabilities. As a result, all persons with disabilities living in the country are covered by pensions.

502. Persons recognized as persons with disabilities are entitled to an employment pension (if they have a record of service and have made compulsory insurance contributions) or a social pension (if they do not receive an employment pension).

503. In August 2018, 567,500 persons with disabilities (21.8 per cent of the total number of beneficiaries (2,592,300)), including 31,600 children with disabilities under 18 years of age, received pensions from the labour, employment and social protection authorities.* The cost of providing pensions to persons with disabilities in 2017 is estimated at approximately 2 billion roubles.

504. The size of the pensions depends on the category of disability and degree of impairment for children with disabilities. Other social circumstances are also taken into account when determining the size of the pension, including the time of the onset of the disability (disability since childhood), the cause of the disability, the need for care and others.

505. Disability pensions are indexed to increases in the average per capita minimum subsistence level and the increase in the average monthly salary of workers in the country. The minimum level of pension provision for persons with disabilities is established at the legislative level.

* Disability pensions are also paid by the defence and law enforcement agencies. If the disability was caused by an accident at work or an occupational disease, the Belarusian national insurance company Belgosstrakh makes the corresponding payments.

506. In accordance with the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, persons with disabilities are provided with social services in the manner and under the conditions established by the legislation on social services (art. 33).

507. Low-income families and citizens experiencing hardship receive State subsistence allowances paid out of local budget funds in the form of four types of social allowance. Since 2012, persons with category I disabilities and children with the highest grade of impairment (degree IV) are provided with social allowances to cover the costs of diapers (to date, 137,400 persons with group I disabilities and children with grade IV impairment).

508. A revised version of the State Allowances for Families with Children Act entered into force in June 2017. The provisions of the new Act are based on the current needs of families raising children with disabilities and are aimed at expanding the rights of citizens in the State allowance system. The law provides in particular for the following:

- Parents working part-time (not more than half of the monthly standard working time) or at home are entitled to a childcare allowance for a child with disabilities (previously, the allowance was paid only to non-working parents).
- The allowance for caring for a child with disabilities under the age of 18 has been increased to 120 per cent of the minimum subsistence level for persons caring for a child with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 18 with grade III or grade IV impairment.
- Families with parents with category I or II disabilities, or with a parent with category I disabilities and a parent caring for the other with a care allowance, have the right to an allowance for children over the age of 3 from certain categories of families until the child reaches 18 years of age, without any conditions attached to their education.

509. A total of over 543,000 children, or almost every third child in the country, are covered by the State allowance system. Allowances for caring for a child with disabilities have been provided to 20,500 children (totalling 48,820 roubles in 2017). Allowances for children over 3 years of age from certain categories of families (the main recipients being families with children with disabilities and families with parents with disabilities) have been provided to 37,300 children (totalling 51 million roubles in 2017).

510. The Act on the Minimum Subsistence Level provides that the minimum subsistence level is the main criterion for declaring a person or family to be disadvantaged and is defined as the minimum amount of food and non-food items and services required to support a person's health and vital activities; its cost is defined in relation to the fixed share (77 per cent) of the value of the minimum selection of food items together with compulsory payments and contributions.

511. In 2017, the share of persons with disabilities living in low-income households was 3.6 per cent.

512. The principles underlying national legislation on water include the provision of drinking water to the population in sufficient quantities and of a guaranteed quality and fair and equal access of the population to water (Act on the Supply of Drinking Water, art. 30). Such standards apply to the entire population, including persons with disabilities.

Article 29

Participation in political and public life

513. The Constitution and the Electoral Code do not contain any restrictions on participation of persons with disabilities in elections in any capacity (a voter, a candidate for an elected office, a member of an election commission, an observer, etc.).

514. Only persons who have been declared to lack dispositive capacity because of a mental disorder (mental illness or intellectual impairment) that prevents a person from understanding or directing his or her actions and persons held in places of detention on the basis of a court sentence may not participate in elections. Persons subject to detention as a preventive measure in accordance with the procedure established by criminal procedure law may not participate in elections. Any direct or indirect restriction of citizens' electoral

rights in other cases is not tolerated and punishable by law (Constitution, art. 64, and Electoral Code, art. 4).

515. A candidate with a disability that prevents him or her from personally engaging in electoral activities at different stages of an election campaign may engage in such activities through members of his campaign staff, representatives by proxy, financial representatives and trustees (this possibility is provided for under the Electoral Code to all candidates).

516. A voter who is unable to travel to a polling station on the election day has the right to vote at a place where he or she is located (Electoral Code, art. 54). A voter who is not able to fill in the ballot by herself or himself has the right to use the assistance of a person other than members of election commissions, candidates, their proxies and observers (Electoral Code, art. 52).

517. It is common practice to set up individual polling stations in health centres, preventive care centres, hospitals and other health organizations providing inpatient medical treatment (Electoral Code, art. 17).

518. During election campaigns, the Central Commission adopts decisions providing for additional measures to create conditions for persons with disabilities to participate in elections (decisions No. 26 of 1 July 2015, No. 76 of 24 September 2015 and No. 24 of 8 June 2016). Cooperation with voluntary associations of persons with disabilities has been promoted.

519. Information material in Braille and special outlays to help blind voters fill in ballot papers without assistance were produced for the 2015 presidential elections in Belarus. Such outlays were also provided for during the elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly in 2016. Voters with visual impairments are provided with magnifiers. For persons with hearing impairments, State television channels provided sign language interpretation for broadcasts of candidates' campaign speeches in the lead up to the presidential election.

520. The Central Electoral Commission is preparing a version of its website for persons with visual impairments, which will be provided with screen readers for blind persons. Visual information is available for voters who have hearing impairments. Television campaign commercials have voice guides and close captions in the most simple and understandable language possible for persons with various intellectual disabilities. The electoral commissions provide printed information about the candidates for the elections to all voters.

521. On polling days, volunteers work at the polling stations to help persons with physical disabilities, and measures are taken to equip buildings with temporary ramps, if technically possible. Most facilities for voting and meetings with the candidates are located on the ground floors and are equipped with barrier-free building elements. The number of facilities with such arrangements used for elections is steadily increasing.

522. A real possibility for this is attested by persons with disabilities standing for election. For example, Y.A. Lyashenko (who lives in Svetlogorsk, Homiel province, and uses a wheelchair) was a candidate for deputy of the House of Representatives in 2016 and of the Homiel provincial and Svetlogorsk city councils of deputies in 2018 and V.A. Timakin (who lives in Pinsk, Brest province, and uses a wheelchair) was a candidate for deputy of the Pinsk City Council of Deputies in 2018.

523. During the elections to local councils of deputies in 2018, the Belarusian National Youth Union organized seminars for the volunteers of the association on teaching skills to help people with disabilities.

524. Participation in public and political life is an indicator of a person's activity. Under article 31 of the Constitution, young people are guaranteed the right to their spiritual, moral and physical development. The State has set in place the necessary conditions for the free and effective participation of young people in political, social, economic and cultural development, including persons with disabilities (991 persons with disabilities study in higher education institutions).

525. Young people's participation in society is made a reality through the activities of various youth and children's voluntary associations aimed at satisfying and protecting the social, economic, creative, spiritual and other rights and legitimate interests of young

people, promoting personal development and shaping positive values and views among the younger generation.

526. According to the Voluntary Associations Act, a public association is a voluntary association of citizens who, according to the procedure established by law, have joined together on the basis of common interests to meet non-material needs and achieve the purposes set forth in their statutes.

527. The Ministry of Education, in accordance with the State Youth Policy Act, keeps a national register of youth and children's voluntary associations that enjoy State support. At present, 16 voluntary associations are listed in this register, including the Belarusian Association for Assistance to Children with Disabilities and Young Persons with Disabilities. This voluntary association carries out a number of activities aimed at increasing opportunities for a higher quality of life for children and young persons with special needs in Belarus: it carries out social projects, publishes books, brochures and pamphlets concerning the education and social rehabilitation of children and young persons with physical or psychological needs.

528. As of 1 January 2018, 2,856 voluntary associations were registered and were actively operating in Belarus. One of the statutory purposes of many voluntary associations is to carry out charitable activities aimed at assisting persons with disabilities. Many members of voluntary associations are persons with disabilities.

529. Under article 35 of the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, voluntary associations of persons with disabilities and voluntary associations of legal representatives of persons with disabilities, in accordance with their statutes, are involved in addressing problems associated with the social protection of persons with disabilities and also providing funding for relevant activities.

530. The national government and local executive and administrative bodies and other agencies, in addressing issues affecting persons with disabilities, call in representatives of voluntary associations of persons with disabilities to help prepare responses, take appropriate decisions and carry them out.

531. The State ensures that the rights and legitimate interests of voluntary associations of persons with disabilities are observed, creates the right framework for them to fulfil their objectives in accordance with their statutes and provides them with aid and support.

532. Interference by State authorities and their officials in the activities of voluntary associations is prohibited, except in the cases provided for by law.

533. Issues affecting the interests of voluntary associations of persons with disabilities are addressed by State authorities and other organizations either with the participation or agreement of the relevant associations (Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, art. 38).

534. Voluntary associations of persons with disabilities take part in the work of the National Interdepartmental Council on Disability under the Council of Ministers to draft a common policy on the prevention of disability and the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

535. The Council includes seven representatives of NGOs, including five organizations of persons with disabilities, which accounts for 29 per cent of its membership.

536. Interdepartmental coordination boards (or commissions) that make decisions on matters affecting the rights of persons with disabilities at the local level have been established in every province in the country.

537. A national action plan on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the period 2017–2025 and other regulatory acts were developed in close cooperation with NGOs.

538. The State provides support for civil society associations of persons with disabilities and organizations established by them upon entering into agreements on projects of NGOs of social importance and funding for the benefits and preferences extended to them.

Article 30

Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

539. Article 51 of the Constitution guarantees that everyone has the right to participate in cultural life. This right is ensured by universal access to the national and world cultural treasures held in State and public collections and by the development of a network of cultural institutions. Freedom of artistic, scientific and technical creativity and instruction is also guaranteed.

540. Under article 29 of the Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, local executive and administrative authorities are required to ensure that persons are able to use and have free access to cultural organizations and fitness and sports facilities for creative activities, physical education and sport and to provide for special sports equipment.

541. By law, persons with disabilities are entitled to use such services free of charge or on concessional terms.

542. Improving the quality of life and promoting the social integration of persons with disabilities is an important area of activity of cultural organizations. Sustained efforts are being made to ensure that persons with disabilities are afforded vocational education opportunities and unrestricted access to information and cultural services and are involved in cultural events of vital importance to them.

543. The Ministry of Culture has consistently worked towards the establishment of barrier-free environments in cultural institutions, including the buildings covered in the State list of historical and cultural assets in Belarus, with due consideration given to preserving the unique distinctive features and architectural integrity of heritage sites, as provided for under the provisions of chapters 16 and 17 of the Culture Code of Belarus.

544. Measures have been taken to create a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities and physical impairments in centrally administered cultural institutions in which restoration, reconstruction or capital repairs were carried out in accordance with the building standards in force when the buildings were put back into operation, namely: the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus; the Belarusian State Philharmonic Society; the Maxim Gorky National Drama Theatre; the Janka Kupala National Academic Theatre; the National Theatre of Belarusian Drama; the Yakub Kolos National Academic Drama Theatre; the castles of Nesvizh and Mir; the National Art Museum of Belarus; the Belarusian State Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War; and the National Library of Belarus.

545. Organizations of voluntary associations of persons with disabilities are offered free group visits to institutions and receive invitation cards to events held in cultural institutions and organized within the framework of national, provincial, city and district celebrations. On average, almost 500 persons with disabilities are provided with cultural and entertainment services free of charge each year.

546. Free guided visits to the country's museums with sign language interpretation are organized for persons with hearing impairments upon prior request.

547. A Union State Festival of the Creative Arts of Persons with Disabilities was held in Mahilioŭ from 22 to 26 November 2017 with a view to supporting arts groups of persons with disabilities and involve persons with disabilities in mass cultural events. Members of the organizing committee for the festival included representatives of the Belarusian Association of Persons with Visual Impairments, the Belarusian Society of Persons with Disabilities and the Belarusian Society of Persons with Hearing Impairments.

548. The Viciebsk – 2017 International Festival of the Creative Arts of Persons with Disabilities was held from 14 to 17 July in Viciebsk under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture.

549. Efforts are being made to integrate persons with disabilities in common cultural events throughout the country and more than 100 publicly funded events are held each year in every province.

550. For example, a music competition for persons with disabilities entitled "Through Life with a Song!" was held in the Brest province cultural community centre on 19 May

2017, and a provincial festival of the creative arts of persons with hearing impairments entitled “Seeing, Creating and Thriving with the Heart” was held in Hrodna on 10 July 2017. In Homiel, work began in March 2017 on a specialized institution for work with persons with disabilities in the area of the creative arts, the Centre for Inclusive Culture, which is a branch of the Homiel City Cultural Centre.

551. Financial backing is provided to arts groups to participate in inclusive events of the National Festival of Ethnic Cultures in Hrodno; support is also provided for the national showing of the mimics and gesture amateur theatre companies of the Belarusian Society of Deaf Persons.

552. There are regular master classes on various handicrafts and applied arts exhibitions and competitions. In 2017, a competition of amateur arts of persons with visual impairments from the Minsk residential establishment, a festival of amateur art of persons with disabilities from Minsk province and a talent fair in Minsk.

553. The countries public libraries focus efforts on ensuring that persons with disabilities are provided with the right of equal access to information, providing them with information and social and cultural services. Public libraries pay special attention to providing services to blind persons and persons with visual impairments.

554. The National Library of Belarus is a national centre that offers library users who are blind or visually impaired specialized reading materials. Such users are provided with personal computers with screen readers or Braille display. The library’s reading rooms are equipped with special equipment for persons with visual impairments, which has made it possible for libraries to provide full services and access to information to persons who are blind or visually impaired on an equal footing with sighted library users.

555. Provincial and district public libraries have made efforts to meet the needs of readers with disabilities by acquiring audiobooks and books in large print formats for their library collections. Minsk operates a special city library to serve persons with visual impairments.

556. In public libraries, persons with disabilities have the opportunity to use free of charge publications from the commercial collection and periodicals from reading rooms. Home services are available for persons with mobility impairments.

557. Centrally administered museums offer audio guide service, which allows persons with visual impairments to visit museum exhibitions; there are also information desks that provide persons with hearing impairments with information about the structures, objects and exhibits. These services are expanding every year. The audio guides are available in multiple languages (Belarusian, Russian, English and Polish) and cover various themes. The Nesvizh National Historical and Cultural Museum and Park, for instance, uses more than 180 audio guides.

558. The rights of persons with disabilities in the area of physical culture and sport are established in the Physical Culture and Sport Act.

559. Article 34 of this law specifies the mechanisms for involving persons with disabilities in physical culture and sport.

560. It states that work to promote physical fitness and sport among persons with disabilities is to be aimed at increasing their mobility and is an integral part of the social rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

561. Local executive and administrative authorities are required to provide persons with disabilities with the conditions necessary for free access to and use of fitness centres and sports facilities and with special sports equipment so that they may take up physical exercise and sport.

562. State bodies carry out physical fitness and sports work with persons with disabilities together with the Paralympic Committee of Belarus, organizations leading the Deaflympics movement of Belarus, Special Olympics movements of Belarus and physical culture and sport organizations carrying out activities in the area of physical culture and sport.

563. The Paralympic movement in Belarus has been rapidly gaining ground since 1996. The Paralympic Committee of Belarus was established in March and registered with the Ministry of Justice; in November 1997, it was recognized by the International Paralympic

Committee, which coordinates the work on development and promotion of sport for persons with visual and locomotor impairments.

564. The following Paralympic sports are developing in Belarus: arm-wrestling; wheelchair basketball; biathlon; boccia; volleyball; cycling; goalball; rowing; judo; athletics; alpine skiing; futsal; table tennis; powerlifting; swimming; wheelchair dance sport; archery; wheelchair fencing; chess; draughts; showdown; football; and a number of other games. In 2017, 26 championships cups in these types of sport were held with more than 1,000 athletes with visual and locomotor impairments taking part.

565. The Deaflympics movement in Belarus has been rapidly growing since 1992.

566. The following Deaflympic sports are now gaining ground: athletics; volleyball; wrestling, freestyle and Greco-Roman; swimming; futsal; beach volleyball; chess; judo; basketball; and table tennis. Competitions and championships in these types of sport are organized and held at the provincial and city levels along with national and international matches, cups, youth sports and athletic contests (Youth Spartakiads), Health Spartakiads and other events in which more than 500 athletes with hearing impairments take part.

567. Along with the Paralympic Committee of Belarus, the main organizations involved in physical training and sport among persons with locomotor impairments include the Belarusian Federation of Physical Culture and Sport for Persons with Disabilities, a voluntary association established in 1997, the provincial and city physical culture and sports clubs for persons with disabilities established more than 25 years ago in each region, the Association of the Belarusian Federation of Physical Culture and Sport for Persons with Disabilities, the Belarusian Wheelchair Dancing and Rhythmic Gymnastics Federation and the National Association of Wheelchair Users.

568. A barrier-free environment for Paralympic athletes has been established in the following sports complexes and facilities used for training by select and national teams and for Paralympic sports competitions:

- Staiki National Olympic Training Centre
- Raubichi National Olympic Training Centre
- National Olympic Athletics Training Centre
- Dinamo Athletics Stadium in Minsk
- Belarusian State University of Physical Culture Athletics Stadium and Pool
- Uruchye sports complex of the Sports Committee of the Armed Forces of Belarus
- Centre for Olympic Trainees in Zhlobin
- Brest Province Centre for Olympic Trainees
- Polesky State University multipurpose sports complex in Pinsk
- Belarusian Prosthetics and Orthotics Rehabilitation Centre sports complex located at Odoevsky Street in Minsk
- Belarusian Athletes with Disabilities Aid Fund sports complex in Kalodzishchy, Minsk district
- Specialized Water Sports School for Young Olympic Trainees in Minsk
- Brest Province Centre for Olympic Rowing Trainees

569. More than 130 groups for persons with disabilities have been set up in the country's community health and fitness centres, with a membership of 1,339 persons, including 1,156 adults and 184 children.

570. Work with persons with disabilities in such sports groups and clubs is carried out by 282 full-time specialists whose training includes physical rehabilitation and occupational therapy and adapted physical culture and health at the Belarusian State University of Physical Culture and by 178 community professionals.

571. Physical culture and sports organizations have established 67 various sports divisions for persons with disabilities in different categories.

572. The 24 specialized sport training facilities of Belarus provide disability sport training to 533 student athletes with disabilities, including 204 athletes enrolled in the National Paralympic and Deaflympic Sports Training Centre.

573. The staff at the Centre currently stands at 108, with 14 administrators, 53 members of the national team and 41 coaches, including 14 work are full-time employees.

574. Given its tradition of involvement in Paralympic and Deaflympic sports in Belarus, pool of talent and the established areas of focus, the Centre has opened 18 sports training divisions, including 11 Paralympic and 7 Deaflympic divisions, comprising 45 groups with 204 student athletes.

575. Homiel Province Centre for Paralympic and Deaflympic Trainees has been set up with a view to promoting the continued development of disability sport in Belarus; it is responsible for recruiting student athletes for training groups and national disability sport teams from among the members of the national and other select disability teams of Belarus or promising student athletes training for official international youth sports competitions at various age-group levels. The Centre has put together 27 training groups. The total number of student athletes is 160.

576. There are 74 athletes with visual and locomotor impairments on the roster of the Belarusian national disability sport team, 27 of whom are in the starting line-up, and 70 athletes with hearing impairments, 16 of whom are in the starting line-up.

577. Belarusian sports teams regularly take part in summer and winter Paralympic and Deaflympic Games.

578. Thus, at the fifteenth Summer Paralympic Games held from 7 to 18 September 2016 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the sports team of Belarus was represented by 20 athletes in 5 sports (athletics, wheelchair fencing, swimming, judo and adaptive rowing).

579. It was represented by 42 athletes in 5 sports (wrestling, freestyle and Greco-Roman, beach volleyball, judo, athletics and swimming) at the twenty-third Summer Deaflympics held from 18 to 30 July 2017 in Samsun, Turkey.

580. The sports team of Belarus was made up of 14 athletes competing in two sports (biathlon and alpine skiing) at the twelfth Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang held from 9 to 18 March 2018.

581. Belarusian athletes won 10 medals at the fifteenth Paralympic Summer Games, including 8 gold and 2 bronze medals. The Belarusian team placed nineteenth in the medal table. At the twenty-third Summer Deaflympics, it took home 16 medals, including 4 gold, 9 silver, 3 bronze, ranking in eleventh place. At the twelfth Paralympic Winter Games, it won 12 medals, including 4 gold, 4 silver and 4 bronze, placing it eighth in the medal table.

582. According to the 2017 calendar of major sports events, 685 disability sports events were held, including 58 in cities, 522 in districts and 105 in provinces, in which 1,487 persons took part.

583. In Belarus, there are 333 accessible physical culture and sports facilities for persons with disabilities, including 61 that are fully accessible (approaches to the facility, entrances, wide openings, accessible toilets, tactile and visual information, ramps, lifts and staircase lifts) and 272 that are partially accessible (access to the gym).

584. One of the target of the State Programme for the Development of Physical Culture and Sport in Belarus for 2016–2020 is the number of health and fitness groups created for persons with disabilities and physical impairments in health and fitness centres. To date, 23 such groups have been set up.

585. The organization of leisure and recreation for persons with disabilities, as well as physical education and sports activities, is carried out by local service, which run hobby groups according to interest.

Article 31

Statistics and data collection

586. In Belarus, a centralized database for the registration of persons with disabilities is being set up to help monitor compliance with the social protection rights of every person with disabilities.

587. Departmental statistical information on the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities is maintained by the national authorities, local councils of deputies and executive and administrative bodies within the limits of their competence.

588. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection collects information once every three months on the number of persons with disabilities, older persons, families with children with disabilities up to the age of 18 and other socially vulnerable categories of citizens registered with the local service centres and receiving various social services.

589. In Belarus, within the framework of the current legislation, the Ministry of Health collects statistical data on matters involving persons with disabilities.

590. A national information and analysis system for the medical evaluation and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities was developed and put into practice in 2014 for medical rehabilitation expert boards; the system is designed for the collection, recording and processing of various information concerning medical expert reviews and the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities in Belarus and also for the establishment of a nationwide personalized databank of disability population information.

591. Statistical data on the number of people recognized by the boards as persons with disabilities are broken down by category of disability (and, for children under 18 years of age, by degree of impairment), by sex, by place of residence (city, village), by age and by category of disease and individual diseases that are causes of disability (according to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, tenth revision (ICD-10), both in the country as a whole and by region.

592. Based on the information of the personalized disability population databank and in accordance with the agreement between the National Statistical Committee and the Ministry of Health on information exchange, data on the medical examination of children by medical rehabilitation expert boards nationwide, in the provinces and in Minsk have been obtained as have data on the adult population by the corresponding medical rehabilitation expert boards. The information is provided on a yearly basis.

593. A collection of statistical information on medical examinations and rehabilitation in Belarus is published every year in two parts, with the first part devoted to disability indicators.

594. With a view to enhancing available information on the social and economic situation of persons with disabilities and improving the quality of data on disability, the National Statistical Committee conducted a one-time sample household survey between April and July 2018 to make a comprehensive assessment of the situation of persons with disabilities. The objectives of the survey are to obtain statistics on the prevalence of disability in accordance with the methodology of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, to obtain information on the socioeconomic situation of families with persons with disabilities, their access to social infrastructure and levels of subjective well-being and on cases of discrimination based on disability and to study the extent to which persons with disabilities enjoy full participation in the civil, economic, social and cultural life of the community.

595. The National Statistical Committee conducted the survey in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the National Centre for Legislation and Legal Research, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), WHO, the Belarusian Association for Assistance to Children with Disabilities and Young Persons with Disabilities and the Belarusian Society of Persons with Disabilities.

596. The data derived from the survey will be disseminated by including them in the official statistical publications and the official website of the National Statistical Committee.⁴

597. Since 2017, a sample household survey on living standards programme conducted annually by the National Statistical Committee breaks down statistical data on disability.

Article 32

International cooperation

598. Belarus recognizes the importance of international cooperation, including for supporting national efforts to realize the purposes and principles of the Convention. International cooperation is inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

599. In order to promote international cooperation and ensure its inclusiveness, article 8 of the Constitution guarantees the recognition of the primacy of the generally accepted principles of international law and ensures that legislation is consistent with them.

600. Current legislation makes it possible to develop and implement international technical assistance projects for persons with disabilities, to hold seminars, conferences and other public discussions, and to solicit and receive foreign aid.

601. Belarus has been a member of ILO since 1954 and has ratified 49 ILO conventions (with 42 conventions now in force), including the 8 fundamental Conventions. Recognizing the primacy of the generally accepted principles of international law, Belarus ensures that its legislation are consistent with ILO convention that have been ratified, which applies to all citizens without any discrimination.

602. Issues related to the exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities and their rehabilitation and integration into society are addressed in joint activities and meetings with representatives of international organizations such as UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and others.

603. The cooperation plan of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the UNICEF office in Belarus for 2017–2018 provides for a comprehensive set of measures designed to develop a system of services for families with children and young persons with disabilities and to improve legislation on children with disabilities.

604. Belarus is cooperating closely with the Russian Federation on the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. At their the joint administrative board sessions in 2013 and 2016, the Ministries of Labour and Social Protection of Belarus and the Russian Federation considered the matter of carrying out systematic measures to establish barrier-free environments and provide assistive technology to persons with disabilities.

605. The Commonwealth of Independent States and Eurasian Economic Union, bodies promoting economic cooperation and integration to which Belarus is a party, take up issues involving the social protection and social services for citizens, including persons with disabilities. The exchange of experience and best practices at the forums of these integration unions on matters involving the promotion, protection and provision of full and equal rights for all persons with disabilities has made a significant contribution to establish the right framework and mechanisms for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention in Belarus.

606. Under the Constitution, Belarus respects the principles and rules of international law and is a party to more than 2,600 bilateral and 1,700 multilateral international treaties and other international legal instruments.

607. There are 16 international and regional organizations in the country actively working with the Government in the field of human rights, including UNDP, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and others.

608. On 3 December each year, with the aim of integrating persons with disabilities into society and fostering tolerance towards them, Belarus celebrates the International Day of

⁴ belstat.gov.by.

Persons with Disabilities, which was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, in 1992, in a special resolution, and 3 December has been declared the Day of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Belarus (Presidential Decree on State Holidays, Holidays and Commemorations in Belarus).

609. Belarus cooperates internationally with foreign States and international organizations in the prevention of disability and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

610. It has entered into contracts with relevant organizations of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, the Republic of Moldova and Kazakhstan.

611. International cooperation is carried out within the framework of exchanges of experience on matters involving medical and social assessments and rehabilitation, vocational rehabilitation and occupational therapy, the application of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health in practice, short-term secondments of experts, joint scientific research on current issues in the area of rehabilitation and expert evaluation processes, including for major diseases that cause disability, conferences and seminars and other events for the exchange of experience and also the results of joint scientific research.

Article 33

National implementation and monitoring

612. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is the national authority responsible for labour and labour protection, employment, social protection, demographic security, alternative service, for coordination of work in these areas by other national authorities and for providing organizational and technical support and information for the work of the National Population Committee attached to the Council of Ministers.

613. The Ministry works in cooperation with national authorities, local councils of deputies, executive and administrative authorities, civil society organizations and associations and international organizations.

614. The national authorities, local councils of deputies and executive and administrative authorities develop and implement social policies with respect to persons with disabilities.

615. The National Interdepartmental Council on Disability attached to the Council of Ministers has been in operation since 2009. This Commission is headed by the Deputy Prime Minister.

616. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has been designated as the authority responsible for disability issues under article 2 of the Act on the Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
