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**Submission from Disabled People’s Organisations Denmark (DPOD) to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women for the**

**ninth examination of the Government of Denmark**

**Introduction**

DPOD is the umbrella organisation for 35 Danish disability organisations. The purpose of DPOD is to enable persons with disabilities to live a life like everyone else. Our work is based on the principles, values and rights in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD).

The purpose of our contribution is to provide additional information on women and girls with disabilities to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for the review of Denmark.

DPOD covers issues related to women and girls with disabilities on a general level. There are no organisations in Denmark specifically representing the rights and interests of women and girls with disabilities.

DPOD has recently joined Women´s Council Denmark. In the future, we shall contribute to their work related to the reporting cycle on Denmark with disability perspectives on women’s rights.

The main themes of our report are:

- Gender mainstreaming

- Violence and sexual assaults

- Equal access to preventative health services

**1. Gender Mainstreaming with a Focus on Women with Disabilities**

Gender mainstreaming is still incomplete and non-binding in many areas, e.g. on the municipal level. In addition, the perspective of women with disabilities is generally absent from the existing gender mainstreaming initiatives.

As pointed out in the Concluding Observations on Denmark from the CRPD Committee in 2014, the Act on Gender Equality does not specifically address women and girls with disabilities. The Committee was also concerned that Denmark had not undertaken any specific initiatives aimed at women and girls with disabilities in the educational system, nor any specific measures for women with disabilities to find or maintain employment. [[1]](#footnote-1)

This situation has not changed. Persons with disabilities have significantly lower educational attainment and labour market participation rates than the rest of the population. Gender inequalities with the population of disabled persons remain.

For example, the labour market participation of women with disabilities (29,5 %) is less than that of men with disabilities (35,8 %) and of other women (58 %). [[2]](#footnote-2)

In addition, women with disabilities are at a higher risk of poverty than men with disabilities and other women: 20,8 % of women with disabilities are at risk of poverty, comparing to 18,9 % of men with disabilities and 15,3 % of other women [[3]](#footnote-3)

Consequently, we suggest the Committee to recommend the State Party:

* To ensure that gender and disability perspectives are included in legislation and policies, in all spheres covered by the Convention.
* To ensures that legislation and policies effectively address risk and marginalization factors specific to women and girls with disabilities in relation to labour market participation and education.
* To take measures to make the voices of women and girls with disabilities heard and given due consideration in public decision-making.

**2. Violence and Sexual Assaults on Women**

Violence and sexual assaults in varying forms very often have serious implications for the victims, and therefore attention to this problem is needed.

Women with disabilities are more exposed to violence and sexual assaults than women in general. A recent study initiated by the Danish Institute for Human Rights shows that persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities in Denmark are especially at risk. [[4]](#footnote-4)

21 % of the victims of violence are persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. That is twice the number in the group of non-victims (10 %). According to the study, women with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities are more exposed to violence than men.

Persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities have an even higher risk of being sexually assaulted. Actually, assaults on this group constitutes one third of all reported sexual assaults on women in Denmark. This means that the problem is by no means a marginal one. [[5]](#footnote-5)

The study also reveals that victims with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities face many barriers in the legal system. They are in need of support in almost all the phases of the legal process, but the legal system is far from adequately adjusted to their needs.

We would like to remind about the Concluding Observations on Denmark from the CRPD Committee in 2014:

“The Committee is concerned at reports showing the level of abuse, exploitation and violence, including domestic violence, to which various categories of persons with disabilities are being exposed, and at the limited number of shelters accessible to victims of such acts, as well as the lack of training of police and other interlocutors. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of available disaggregated data on the reports of abuse, exploitation and violence by persons with disabilities, and on their outcomes.

The Committee recommends that the Governments of Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Greenland ensure that violence and abuse against all persons with disabilities is duly reported and investigated; that the necessary support for victims is available, including accessible hotlines, shelters, services and complaints mechanisms; and that the issue is addressed in national training courses for personnel working in health and medical care, schools, the police force and the judiciary. The Committee also recommends that the Governments collect disaggregated data and statistics on the reports of abuse, exploitation and violence by persons with disabilities, and on their outcomes**.**” [[6]](#footnote-6)

The study referred to above shows that problems remain, and that the recommendations have not been acted upon.

Consequently, we suggest the Committee to recommend the State Party:

* To adopt an action plan aiming at preventing and combatting violence and sexual assaults against women and girls with disabilities, in particular those with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.
* To collect data and statistics on the extent of abuse, violence and sexual assaults, disaggregated by gender and disability.
* To take measures to ensure victims equal access to justice, in particular women and girls with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities; in line with the CEDAW and the EU Directive on Victims’ Rights. [[7]](#footnote-7) Measures should include individual assistance and support at all stages in the legal process.

**3. Equal Access to Preventative Health Services (National Cancer Screening Programs)**

Women with disabilities are not participating on an equal footing with others in preventative healthcare.

According to the EU Gender Equality Index 2020: [[8]](#footnote-8)

* Only 24,8 % of women with disabilities perceived themselves in good or very good health, comparing to 33% of men with disabilities and 86,6% of other women.
* 12,7 % of women with disabilities have unmet needs for medical examination, comparing to 4,6% of other women.
* 9,6 % of women with disabilities have unmet needs for dental examination, comparing to 6,9% of other women.

We know from scientific studies and many individual accounts that women with disabilities find it difficult or impossible to participate in national cervical cancer and breast cancer screening programs. Low participation rates increase the risk of premature death, and too little is done to ensure equal access to preventive health care for women with disabilities.

A survey shows that only 16 % of women with cerebral palsy in special-needs residences took part in national cervical cancer screenings.[[9]](#footnote-9) This is far below the average of around 75 % of women in general.

A study on national cervical cancer screenings from the Danish Cancer Society has documented the variety of barriers experienced by women with physical disabilities. Barriers may range from the lack of adjustable equipment to transportation problems and lack of accessible information. [[10]](#footnote-10)

There is little attention to these problems from regional and national health authorities. For example, general targets for improving participation rates do exist, but there are no specific targets for women with disability.

Consequently, we suggest the Committee to recommend the State Party:

* To adopt measures to improve equal access to preventative national cancer screening programs (cervical cancer and breast cancer) for women with disabilities. Measures should include: A national action plan with specific targets, monitoring mechanisms, and investment programs aiming to improve the accessibility to national cancer screening facilities.
* To provide relevant training to health professionals and officials in the public health authorities.



Disabled Peoples’ Organisations Denmark (DPOD) works to support persons with disabilities to live a life like everyone else: participate, contribute and be a part of the collective. DPOD is the joint voice for 35 disability organisations and we represent all types of disabilities.

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1. Cf. the recommendations in para. 18 and 19 on Article 6 (Women with Disabilities) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. the work indicators in the European Gender Index on Denmark (2020). The figures cited presents the “Full-time equivalent employment rate”: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/domain/work/DK/disability> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. the work indicators in the European Gender Index on Denmark (2020) “Economic situation”: https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/domain/money/DK/disability [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Voldsofre med psykiske og kognitive handicap. En undersøgelse af barrierer i straffesagsprocessen.” (2020) <https://menneskeret.dk/sites/menneskeret.dk/files/media/document/Layoutet%20hovedrapport_WEB_Voldsofre%20med%20handicap.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid, pp. 31-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse (Article 16), para. 40-41 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/domain/health/DK/disability> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. A study on grown-ups with cerebral palsy in Denmark: “Voksne med cerebral parese I Danmark”. Statens Institut for Folkesundhed (2017): <https://www.sdu.dk/da/sif/rapporter/2017/voksne_med_cerebral_parese_i_danmark> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://www.cancer.dk/fagfolk/rapporter/hpv-hjemmetest-til-kvinder-med-fysisk-funktionsnedsaettelse/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)