

# STATEMENT ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

UPR PRE-SESSION ON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA  
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**Organization MyRight – Empowers people with disabilities  
is a member of  
BiH Civil Society Initiative for UPR**

MyRight-Empowers people with disabilities is a Swedish umbrella organization of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) that supports the development and work of similar organizations worldwide. Since 2009, MyRight has been active in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), working tirelessly to build a society where persons with disabilities enjoy equal rights and opportunities for a dignified life, free from poverty, within an inclusive society.

MyRight in Bosnia and Herzegovina provides comprehensive support to OPDs, particularly small and grassroots member-based organizations, enabling them to become stronger and more effective. As a resource center, we offer extensive capacity-building programs that equip OPDs with essential skills in administration, strategic planning, and advocacy, empowering organizations to manage their operations effectively and advocate for their rights as guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We take pride in our pioneering work supporting women with disabilities and addressing gender-based violence.

## **Statement outline**

This statement will cover rights of persons with disabilities in BiH. The recommendations that our state received and accepted through the Universal Periodic Review 2019. concerning the rights of persons with disabilities have not been fully implemented. The progress has been made in creation of some law which are step forward, but still not in line with the CRPD.

Despite some progress, Bosnia and Herzegovina has yet to reach a satisfactory level in implementing the rights of persons with disabilities.

While some recommendations from the last Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle have been partially addressed, critical areas still require systematic and coordinated actions for comprehensive and sustainable improvements.

1. A single, unified definition of "disability" across Bosnia and Herzegovina would help standardize rights and services for persons with disabilities. Currently, definitions and provisions differ by entity and canton, creating significant barriers to equal treatment. A clear action plan with set deadlines and responsible entities is essential for aligning all levels of legislation with the CRPD, ensuring a cohesive approach that eliminates inconsistencies in service and support.

**R 1. Establish a plan with clear deadlines and assigned responsibilities to harmonize legislation with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) at all levels of the Bosnia and Herzegovina administration.**

**Adopt a harmonized, human rights-based concept of disability.**

2. When it comes to the entity level, the F BiH currently works on a new strategy to improve the rights and position of persons with disabilities, which would replace the previous strategy, which expired in 2021. The 2017-2026 Strategy for Improving the Social Position of Persons with Disabilities is being implemented in the RS, and the reports on its implementation, prepared by the Interdepartmental Body of the RS Government are not available to the general public. Both Strategies mostly lack financial allocation in budgets for its implementation.

**R 2. Improve coordination across all levels of government and ensure equitable distribution of resources for implementing strategies to advance the position of persons with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.**

3. Understanding disability through a human rights lens is vital for all public sector employees, especially as new laws and policies should shift away from a purely medical model. This education would help civil servants recognize the importance of equitable treatment and respect for human dignity, directly improving interactions and services for persons with disabilities.

**R 3. Introduce mandatory education on the human rights-based approach to disability for civil servants and employees of public institutions.**

4. As legislative changes are underway, it is crucial to establish that reasonable accommodation is a legal right. This requirement would clarify the obligations of employers, educators, and service providers to prevent discrimination and support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all areas of life.

**R 4. Introduce legal obligations for providing reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, with clear guidelines stating that failure to provide such accommodations constitutes discrimination based on disability.**

5. Only one law on education, recently passed in canton Sarajevo, prescribe the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. However, it does not state that denial of reasonable accommodation once asked, discriminates against students on the basis of disability. Budgets for education do not plan sufficient resources for quality inclusive education for children/young people with disabilities, which includes the financing of reasonable accommodation.

**R5. Amend education laws at all levels to mandate the provision of reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, and ensure sufficient budget allocation for quality inclusive education for all students with disabilities.**

6. One of the main challenges identified in recent legislative processes is the failure to include persons with disabilities early on. Inclusive consultation mechanisms are needed to ensure that laws genuinely reflect the needs and rights of those they impact, reducing the need for later amendments and creating more effective, durable policies.

**R 6. Establish mechanisms for consultation and meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in policy and law-making processes from the outset, to ensure these truly reflect their rights.**

7. Current anti-discrimination laws lack provisions that address complex, layered discrimination, particularly for women with disabilities who experience multiple, intersecting forms of bias. A clear and accessible legal definition of intersectional discrimination would address these unique challenges, ensuring equal protections and support under the law for vulnerable groups. This definition must be easily understandable, especially for those most affected, to ensure that they can recognize their rights and seek protection under the law effectively.

**R 7. Improve anti-discrimination law by including a clear definition of multiple/intersectional discrimination, addressing unique challenges arising from overlapping discrimination based on gender and disability, which disproportionately affects women with disability.**

Your support in giving the presented recommendations on behalf of your respective states urging the authorities to better protect, respect, and fulfill the rights of persons with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, would be greatly appreciated.