



## NEWS REPORT

**Date:** 22 June 2010  
**Expert :** Corina Demetriou  
**Title:** Self initiated investigation of the equality body into the participation of a paraplegic student in a school charity trip.  
**Country:** Cyprus  
**Context**  
**Issue at stake:** The equality body finds that the Ministry of Education failed to take the necessary measures to ensure the participation of a student with disability to a school trip.  
**Ground of discrimination:** Disability  
**Source:** Equality body report  
Ref. No. AYT.P.1/2009,  
[http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/Ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/1E15304D39A7D509C22577050038D31B/\\$file/AYT.P.%201.2009-13042010.doc?OpenElement](http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/Ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/1E15304D39A7D509C22577050038D31B/$file/AYT.P.%201.2009-13042010.doc?OpenElement)  
**Field:** Education  
**Legislative provisions:** Law on Persons with Disability (Amendment) 2004; Council Directive 2000/78/EC; Charter of Fundamental Rights article 21; Treaty of the European Union article 13;

### Content

**Case:** The equality body launched an investigation into an incident widely reported in the media concerning the participation of a paraplegic student in a school charity event on 8 December 2008. The event consisted of a short plane tour for the students from one city to another and their transport to and from the airport by bus. An issue had arisen in the media following a complaint by the national organisation of the paraplegics that the said student had been excluded from the event because the bus selected to transport the students to and from the airport was unsuitable for paraplegics. The student's father alleged that the school authorities initially

proposed that the student be assisted to board a normal bus (i.e. without accessibility features) but this was rejected by the father for reasons of safety. Instead the father proposed that a special bus be hired for this trip, upon which he was informed by the Ministry of Education that this would involve an additional cost of 500 Euros which the Ministry was unwilling to pay just for one student. In lieu, the Ministry proposed to pay 250 Euros in order for the student in question to be transported to the airport by taxi, but this was rejected by the father because it was contrary to the team spirit that the event was trying to reinforce.

**Decision of the Equality Body:** The report concludes that although the two sides do not entirely agree on the sequence of events, it nevertheless emerges that the Ministry of Education did not take the necessary measures to ensure the participation of the student with the kinetic disability to the school trip, even though it was aware well in advance about the special needs arising out of the participation to the trip of students from the special unit of the school. Even when the father of the student supplied information to enable the school authorities to provide for the needs of his daughter, the information was not adequately assessed by the school. The solutions proposed for the transportation of the student were superficial because they either compromised the student's safety or they provided for the individual transportation of the student to the airport by taxi. Under the circumstances, the most appropriate solution would have been the use of a special bus despite the cost, which is in any case small compared to the educational gain to be derived from the equal participation of the student to the school trip. The report recommends that the Ministry of Education studies as a matter of priority the equal participation of students with disabilities to the whole spectrum of educational activities including trips and events and adopt measures to ensure the removal of obstacles to equal participation is done in consideration of the special characteristics of every student with disability, in order to reduce educational exclusion of students with disability.