



NEWS REPORT

Date: 05 June 2009
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Title: Implementation of measures to promote accessibility for persons with disabilities in polling stations
Country: Portugal

Context

Issue at stake: Access to public premises
Ground of discrimination: of disability
Source: Miscellaneous
Field: Other
Legislative provisions: Decree-law 163/2006 of 08 August 2006

Content

Case: The Associação Portuguesa de Deficientes - APD (Portuguese Association of Persons with Disabilities) had issued a statement regarding the three forthcoming elections which will take place in Portugal (European Parliament, legislative elections and local government).

They complain that despite their efforts addressed to the Associação Nacional de Municípios (National Association of Municipalities), the Ministério da Administração Interna (Ministry of Internal Affairs) and the Comissão Nacional de Eleições (National Electoral Commission), many people with reduced mobility will not be able to vote as accessibility is not guaranteed and also the system of voting is not adapted to visually impaired people.

APD had contacted the entities responsible for the electoral process in order to safeguard the right to vote of persons with disabilities, but until now none of those entities replied or tried to take any measures to ensure the voting of people with disabilities.

Portugal recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (8th May 2009) which states in article 29 (participation in political and public life of persons with disabilities) that "State Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others, and shall undertake to ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be



elected, *inter alia*, by ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use and by protecting the right of persons with disabilities to vote by secret ballot in elections and public referendums without intimidation.”

According to APD, despite the information leaflets distributed to the organisations of persons with disabilities concerning the elections for the European Parliament about the importance of voting and the implications of low turnout, the inaccessibility may lead to the non-participation of those voters on this election.