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Jačanje političkog učešća osoba sa invaliditetom u Republici Srbiji
Strengthening political participation of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Serbia

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“Strengthening political participation of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Serbia”

Milestone 3 Report
Annex 2
Study Visit Report



Submitted by Centre for Independent Living Serbia (CIL), Project Lead in partnership with National Association of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities Serbia (NOOIS)

Submitted: July 22, 2016

Introduction

The SPPPWD Project consists of a combination of new and tried elements, with a dynamic progression built in the Project design. Thus, the Parliamentary Disability Caucus Group has already been established and tested in the National Assembly but under a very different set of circumstances and the PDGC previously organized under the SPPPWD is more focused and more operational. Still, the Project partners are always looking for opportunities to improve design and maximize impact of project investment. Thus, it is good practice to explore similar experiences in other countries, especially EU countries with solid solutions in place regarding independent living of persons with disabilities. By exposing local actors to experiences representing a closer match to the end goal from the perspective of the disability movement, it is hoped that they will open up more, understand better the requested changes and more actively contribute to making them happen. Put simply, the study visit is both the collection of new knowledge and experience, as well as an advocacy tool for the future work of disability movement.

Within the SPPPWD project, Study visit is planned as one of the important project activities. This activity included the following organizational tasks:

- Selection of study visit destination
- Study visit preparation
- Composing the SPPPWD Delegation
- Finalizing participant list and logistics
- Pre study visit meeting
- Study visit held
- Meeting summaries
- Study visit report

Selection of study visit destination

The SPPPWD Project Team examined different EU countries looking for parliaments with a parliamentary group on disability in place. Apart of Parliamentary Group established in the European Parliament, there were only two options we managed to find about, where such groups are still operational: Parliament in UK and Parliament in Scotland. The oldest and most functional group was found in the United Kingdom. It was founded in 1969 and has been operational ever since. Secondly, the Serbian disability movement has close ties with the disability movement in the UK and the concept of independent living has traveled to Serbia from the UK and Ireland, through personal transformative experiences of some of the movement leaders. Thirdly, the UK disability movement has a very strong and mature portfolio of policy advocacy by disabled persons' organizations. Fourthly, the UK is undergoing austerity measures – as is Serbia and they have adversely affected level of support for persons with disabilities ever since the universal antidiscrimination act was introduced in 2010. All vulnerable groups have been lumped together and the integrity of each group suffered as a result as the government sought to reduce welfare expenditure. As there are talks in Serbia regarding similar changes, the Project Team wanted to seize this opportunity to discuss relevant issues with policy makers and DPOs in presence of a similar mix on our end. The project team and DPOs in Serbia are less familiar about the election legislation in the UK, therefore the Team found it important to get more information on that subject from the first hand, as the better access of PWD to elections is also one of the components of SPPPWD project.

Study visit preparation

Once the study visit destination was decided upon, it was important to benefit as much as possible from the stay in London, UK. The Project Director launched a campaign to establish contacts with the UK counterparts. This proved to be very difficult and time consuming. Overall, it took three

months to come up with a draft agenda. The main issue was that it is not a habit for MPs in the UK to communicate directly with citizens outside of their constituency. Coming from a Serbian civil society organization, a request for a meeting represented the most unusual practice and was often left without an answer or it took a very long time to say that this was not a good entry point but nobody could really say who to start from in the UK Parliament. Overall, the SPPPWD Project Director exchanged over 70 e-mails and phone calls with the UK counterparts in order to finally get through to All Party Parliamentary Group on Disability and All Party Parliamentary Group on Serbia. This breakthrough was made possible owing to support from Disability Rights UK and the European Network on Independent Living. The first draft agenda for the study visit was agreed in the second half of May and finally created 29th June 2016. Simultaneously, all information for a cost estimate and visa application procedures were also acquired.

To make things more complex, the Serbian parliament was dissolved and no assistance could be asked from the Parliament Speaker or other PDGC members, firstly because of their involvement in political campaigns and secondly because they did not feel like they could undertake international initiatives until the new convocation, which finally was constituted on 22nd June 2016. In addition, it was necessary to place the time for Study visit while UK Parliament is still having sessions. The latest date for a visit was between 27th June – 14th July. For a while it seemed like the study visit was in question. The entire time, however, individual MPs from the previous Parliament legislature continued to be supportive of the idea and the project. They just did not feel like they had the power to leave Belgrade at such a sensitive political moment when the most important parliamentary session supporting the new government was very likely to be scheduled. A relatively modest majority of 130 MPs made things even more sensitive for individual MPs who were to break that decision to their caucuses. Therefore, it was out of question for the Speaker and PDGC Chair to go. The Vice Chair of PDGC, Vesna Rakonjac fell ill and cancelled the travel in the last moment, though she had applied for the visa. SPPPWD Project Director consulted with the Speaker's Cabinet and was told to it was highly unlikely that any MP from the ruling coalition would get a permission to go away in early July. Luckily, the other MP who was a planned member of the delegation, Dubravka Filipovski, New Serbia political party *Deputy President*, PDGC member and one of Women's Parliamentary group coordinators, member of the ruling coalition mastered the courage to go.

The SPPPWD Delegation

As stated in the SPPPWD Work plan, the delegation was supposed to include two MPs, one Republican Election Commission member and SPPPWD Project Team. In fact, we had managed to form the delegation consisted of: one MP, Dubravka Filipovski, a Republican Election Commission representative, Maja Pejčić, working with Serbia Development Agency, a representative of Commissioner for Equality Protection, Tijana Milošević and the following members of SPPPWD Project Team: Gordana Rajkov, Project Director and Component 1 Coordinator (Cooperation with the Parliament), Sanja Nikolin, Project Manager, Mimica Živadinović, Project Coordinator, Ivanka Jovanović, Component 3 Coordinator (Local activities), Sofija Mandić, Component 2 Coordinator (Electoral Reform). In addition, the 10 members' strong delegation included 2 personal assistants for members who are disabled wheelchair users, Biljana Ducic, PA to Ivanka Jovanovic and Andjelka Janicijevic, personal assistant to Gordana Rajkov.

All members of the delegation speak English and have area-specific expertise (parliamentary operation, policy cycle management, election process, community-based social services provision, welfare systems, disability rights, independent living and CRPD, social services innovation, etc.). It was noted by the UK counterparts that this was both an all women and a highly competent delegation.

Finalizing study visit participant list and logistics

The project team organized applications for all members of the delegation for a business visa to UK (which is very complicate and time consuming procedure) with G solution group support. The hotel, air fares, transfer and per diem were all pre-paid for by CIL on 30th June 2016. The total cost of the study visit amounted to \$ 17,980.10.

The study visit participants flew on Air Serbia economy class and they were accommodated in double rooms of the Premier Inn hotel in London. This particular hotel was selected for accessibility and proximity to Parliament building.

Pre-study visit meeting

The pre study visit meeting was organized on 23rd June 2016. It was held in the Parliament building in presence of delegation members and USAID AOR Aleksandra Kržić Zorić.

The following meeting agenda was followed: purpose of the visit; expected results; check Study visit agenda, define roles of member delegation at individual meetings; decide who would in some way in front of the team played a leading role in the conversation; and go through some technical and logistic issues.

Participants concluded that members of the delegation will jointly attend most meetings in order to benefit from the different perspectives and experiences of delegation members but also to facilitate more effectively dissemination of new knowledge and information after the study visit.

Study visit held

The study visit took place from July 3 to 7, 2016. The visit was effectively facilitated by Disability Rights UK and the European Network on Independent Living.

The study visit agenda included the following meetings:

Date/time	Persons participated at the meetings	Location
Sunday, 3 July	Arrival	
	Monday, 4 July	
10:00 – 11:30	Philip Connelly, Disability Rights UK	DRUK office, Amersham room, Ground Floor,Can Mezzanine, 49-51 East Road, London N1 6AH http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/contact-us
11.30 – 13.00	Ines Bulic, ENIL Andy Greene, Disability Action Islington Tara Flood, Alliance for Inclusive Education	DRUK office, Amersham Room
14.00 – 16.00	Electoral Commission Ana Doncic, Head of Policy and Policy Adviser Tom Hawthorn, Head of Electoral Policy	Electoral Commission 3 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8YZ www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Lizzie Tovey, Senior Electoral Adviser

Tuesday, 5 July

13:30	Meeting with Philip Conolly at Westminster Underground Station	Westminster Underground station
14:00 – 15:00	Meeting with Baroness Hollins, member of Select Committee on the Equality Act 2010 and Disability	House of Lords, Millbank House Room 1.03
15.00 – 16.00	Karen Lumley MP, Head of APPG for Serbia	Portcullis House, UK Parliament

Wednesday, 6 July

9:30	Meeting with Philip at Westminster Underground Station	Westminster Underground station
10:00 – 11:00	Dr Lisa Cameron, MP – Chair of APPG for Disability	Portcullis House, UK Parliament
13:00 – 14:00	Westminster City Council Representative from Action Disability Kensington and Chelsea ADKC http://adkc.org.uk/ and from Carers Network http://carers-network.co.uk/ Our resource information has been developed by the 3 boroughs, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham. It is web based and called People First http://www.peoplefirstinfo.org.uk/	Crofton Room in the Freeman Suite, Kensington Town Hall, Hornton St, London W8 7NX

Thursday, 7 July

10.00	Departure
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Meeting summaries

Meeting 1, Philip Connelly, Disability Rights UK

This was an introductory meeting to help the delegation understand local context, development of disability movement in the UK, current challenges and the role of DRUK. Philip Connolly is a policy advisor and parliamentary manager with DRUK. He is a visually impaired person and a visionary. He is actively involved with innovative approaches to expanding PWD access to resources, decision making and control. There are currently about 80,000 charities in the UK concerned with medical issues at national, some regional and local level. In addition, there are 62,000 social enterprises.

DRUK has the role of a “critical friend” to decision makers. This is not always easy since 1 in 3 pounds spent by civic society is provided by government, mainly to procure services. DRUK is now getting two grants, one is from the Department of Health to advise government on health issues, and the other one is on Business, innovation and skills to help close the skills gap for PWDs. DRUK has around 1000 individual members and several hundred organizational members. They provide advice on the welfare system to them.

DRUK responds to calls for consultations, sends letters, it is a members of the Disability Benefits consortium, Disability Charity Consortium that gathers 7 top charities, it lobbies parliamentarians. For example, the government wants to abolish



the work-related premium and DRUK lobbies them not to. If it is passed, people who have received benefits would now lose 28% of what they received.

DRUK does research, writes reports, identifies recommendations, launches reports and e-mails activists to support and write to their parliamentarians. This is called *E-mail to action*. This mechanism is often successful. If there are 100,000 signatures on an initiative, then they mandate parliament to rule on it. Another mechanism is Twobbing – when they use twitter for lobbying.

Lately, issues with the government started under austerity in 2010, with Coalition government under Osborne. As a result, disabled people's opportunities have been diminished. For example, removal of disabled living allowance of people living in residences. Now, there is Conservative majority since 2015.

According to Mr. Connolly, all progressive change comes from parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activity. In general, politicians are not proactive, they are reactive and very few have ideas of their own. They react to pressure. To change Parliament, it is important to strengthen civic society. The real opportunity comes from the change we create ourselves.

With regards to Brexit, great number of PWDs voted to stay in because of their rights and anti-poverty, equalization across social divides, environmental protection, etc. This all was also supported from Europe. Now there is huge uncertainty. It is hard to see opportunities at this time. So many of the things that PWDs have fought for now come under scrutiny. There will be attempts to re-run the referendum. The financial sector did not want this either. That morning, government reduced corporation tax to 15%. Is the UK going to become a tax heaven? Inevitably, the relationship with EU will get worse.



One of DRUK's work tracks pertains to changing narratives. The story of disability has been a negative one under austerity: PWDs don't work, they claim benefits, even those who do not need them, cheating the system, they are work-shy and dishonest. We have to tell a different story. How do we change the story on

disability? DRUK opted for a strength based approach – they focus on what people can do, on resilience. As a partially blind person, Philip understood at the time of global economic crisis in 2008 that this is a period of massive change – harmful a lot of the time, and a period of loss. He wondered who knows about coping with loss and change. He realized that disabled people are experts on the issue as 95% of disability is acquired. They share a narrative of non-disabled where there is a shock in the environment. After shock, people need to find balance, they use resilience and sometimes become stronger than before the shock. He realized that people don't have to understand the story about the social model but change, resilience etc. Now PWDs have a universal language. It transcends 'us'. It talks to 'them'. That is very powerful. Philip is very interested in resilience thinking and psychology and science. He wants PWDs to think as a community.

Philip Connolly came up with a way to communicate (soft) and build (hard) resilience by giving people the tools through 'Be Resilient' app platform. People can make videos in how they adapted to coping and upload videos. This becomes a platform, a library of disabilities. When people become disabled they can log on and find their peers. It is a learning network. It transfers hope.

He is also passionate about digital fabrication skills. 3D printing to aid disabled people. For example one PWD designed a handle to open bottles. UK Arts and humanities research council funds it. They are interested in connecting disconnected communities. The principal investigator is a doctor in creative writing. This is a sign of taking power back. Essentially, it is about finding power in other things, outside the government. All change should be anchoring human rights, if we want it to be enduring.

Single Equality Act in 2010 came in just before the coalition government. It recognizes 4 types of discrimination: direct, indirect, a failure to make reasonable adjustment, and harassment. Enforcement is a problem.

In thinking about human rights, LGBT community is the champion in advancing their rights. For example, there is a documentary 'How to stop a play' and it is very inspirational about homosexuality and gay rights.

Gay people are the most successful campaigner in the last 30 or 40 years. Why? They've started as individuals, vulnerable, etc. In his resignation speech, Cameron announced that he is proud gay people could marry. For Connolly, their success lies in:

- Sense of activity and activism – they came together to get access to affordable treatment
- Based experience in campaigning in their own personal experience in treatment, so if they were not successful, they were going to die, and many did, so they came together at funerals, produced their own manuals, DIY culture developed.
- Challenge to the elites. Medical elites, the church, services were disrupted because they do not have the right to stigmatize gay people who were vocal about it.
- Very strong political engagement, challenging them
- Strong emphasis on culture. New York disco influenced by gay people, parades, fashion, wearing ribbons in solidarity with gay people. Very strong tool in shifting attitudes – culture.

By a combination of these methods, gay people won

Meeting 2 Andy Greene, Disability Action Islington, Tara Flood, Alliance for Inclusive Education, Jane Morrin, Islington Personal Budget's network, Sandy Marts co director of Islington personal budgets network and president of disability action Islington and Ines Bulic, European Network on Independent Living

This meeting was a further step in awareness rising on local realities of PWDs and DPOs in the London area. Islington is small geographically: 6 x 3 miles but it has about 211,000 people and 2 MPs, including the current Labor leader. Andy Green presented how Disability Action Islington responded to initiative Disabled People against Cuts. The composition of this community is challenging because 1/3 of inhabitants rent their homes, 1/3 is private sector and only 1/3 are home owners. Thus, relatively rich population lives in 2/3 of the community and 1/3 is very poor, on benefits and with low pay. There is a large number of PWDs. About 20% of the population self-identify as PWD. On top of that, there are senior citizens. Inhabitants of Islington use 170 different languages, so it is a very mixed community. In total, 2,500 persons receive a direct service.



Brexit has adversely affected community harmony. Level of hate crime is coming out. The two local DPOs take different perspectives: one is a rights organization

and the other is a service provider. The service provider is based on co production in service provision based on the principle of parity: seeing people as the same. For them, this is the 1st year of funding and they have waited for funding for 18 months. Their plan is to have peer support. They are supporting people to develop services in their own way. In other words, they are about 'stimulating the market'. Co-production is about agreeing on how things are done and then moving on so that users can have an independent life.

Local organizations' thinking is that if there are significant budgets and theoreticians on top, money is typically wasted. In this way, with co-production, services may cost the same or less, but with a better result. It is not simply about buying staff but about managing it better. Plus, there are additional things that one can do without money. People who become disabled later in their life are lost. This is about wellbeing and supporting people to have a life. A warning is that voluntary sector can end up as an arm of the local government if they are not careful. People are told to fight for money instead of agreeing on outcomes.

It is shifting now. Voices have been removed from DPOs in the last 20 or 25 years due to economic crises and cultural divisions. PWDs do not have a collective voice and they need to find those skills again. Focus on just services and funding and organizations that offer something that can be measured over a short period of time, it really misses on people's aspirations. Organizations will have to reevaluate what their role is and how to move forward. It is time for taking stock. It has to be forward looking.

The co-production element is very important. Getting people to realize they have got skills that can contribute to a community. Confidence building for people who have become disabled is a main service that Islington Personal Budgets' Network provides.

Sandy Marts spoke about why she stopped using centrally provided services. She had someone come 3 times a week and Meals on Wheels. They said it was against health and safety standards to take her shopping. Instead, she needed to give them money. At one point, they refused to do her shopping and left her for the whole weekend without food. She decided that you can't live like this when you don't know if anyone will come to find you and her kids who are usually around were away then. She then subscribed to direct payment. The advantage is that she can be more flexible. She can work out the dynamic. She can spell out what tasks she needs done and if it has the agreed outcome, it is ok. This shift from a task assessment to an outcome assessment is an important change. For PWDs, waiting for the service to happen takes more time than the actual service. You need it to be more flexible but it is not that easy. Not a lot of support for people to do that properly. Most have never been employers or managers before and PWDs need to be strengthened as employers.

Andy Greene said that most people are actually struggling to make personal budgets to work for them. When they work they work really well. Most people do not have those market activities. Not given the right training. The process mostly happens to people than for people. On the surface giving people control over their own resources is a natural direction of travel. However, it does fit into the idea of a shrinking state. As a block, people can't respond. It becomes far less obvious across the board. Eight times reviewed needs and always cut down in Islington. Legally we are meeting your needs but really your support has been cut. 2 million pounds to transition to direct payment and 1, 9 mil spent internally. When it works it really works well. People, who are vocal, understand their need – they benefit.

Key terms in UK service provision for PWDs and other eligible groups

Direct payments are cash payments given to service users in lieu of community care services they have been assessed as needing, and are intended to give users greater choice in their care. The

payment must be sufficient to enable the service user to purchase services to meet their eligible needs, and must be spent on services that meet eligible needs.

Direct payments confer responsibilities on recipients to decide how their eligible needs are met, either by employing people, often known as personal assistants, or by commissioning services for themselves. Service users can get support in fulfilling these responsibilities from direct payment support services commissioned by local authorities, often from user-led organisations. Like community care services, direct payments are means-tested so their value is dependent on a person's income and assets as well as their eligible needs.

Direct payments are available across the UK and to all client groups, including carers, disabled children and people who lack mental capacity. However, they cannot be used to purchase residential care or services provided directly by local authorities.

Personal budgets are an allocation of funding given to users after an assessment which should be sufficient to meet their assessed needs. Users can either take their personal budget as a direct payment, or – while still choosing how their care needs are met and by whom – leave councils with the responsibility to commission the services. Or they can have some combination of the two.

One version of a council-managed personal budget is an [individual service fund](#), under which the budget is held by a care provider but the service user can choose how some or all of it is spent. ISFs have been used to apply [personal budgets to residential care](#).

As a result, they provide a potentially good option for people who do not want to take on the responsibilities of a direct payment. Personal budgets have been rolled out in England since 2008. In Scotland, where they are known as individual budgets, there are also plans to roll them out, under the country's [self-directed support strategy](#), which has been turned into legislation through the [Social Care \(Self-Directed Support\) Act 2013](#). This requires councils to offer people eligible for social care support the option of a direct payment, an individual budget managed by the council, a service commissioned by the council or a mixture of any of the three.

The role of social care professionals. Social workers and other care staff play a number of roles in the delivery of direct payments and personal budgets.

Decision-making – helping service users decide whether a direct payment or council-managed personal budget is right for them.

Assessment and resource allocation – assessing service users' needs, or supporting them to assess their own needs, and allocating a budget to meet them, based on a resource allocation system.

Risk management and enablement – helping service users manage risks in their lives and regarding their care and support, and supporting them to take risks.

Challenging the size of a personal budget – social workers may feel that a person's personal budget is insufficient to meet their needs, in which case they would take the case to a council funding panel.

Support planning and brokerage – drawing up a support plan in partnership with the service user and their family, and providing information on or sourcing services to implement the support plan (brokerage). While these functions are often carried out by council social care staff, some argue that they are better provided by external, specialist organisations, including user-led organisations. There is also support for users and their families to lead the support planning process, with social workers only providing assistance where requested; this has been [taken forward in councils including York](#).

Review – keeping a service user’s support needs under review to ensure they are successfully meeting people’s needs.

Number of personal budget and direct payment service users. As of March 2012, 53% of ongoing users of community services in England were on personal budgets – some 432,000 people – were using personal budgets, [according to the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services’](#) annual survey of councils. This was an increase of 38% on the March 2011 figure.

Take-up varies between councils but there was a big fall in 2011-12 in the number of authorities with low take-up rates. As of March 2012, 7% of councils had no more than a quarter of eligible service users on personal budgets, compared with 26% in March 2011.

Personal budgets for all by 2013 – or 2015. In its [2010 adult social care strategy](#), the UK government set an ambitious target of having all council-funded service users and carers on personal budgets, preferably as a direct payment, by April 2013. This was interpreted by council leaders as applying to ongoing users of community-based services, not those in residential care or anyone receiving short-term or one-off support. The [target has proved controversial](#) with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services warning that it has artificially driven councils to move people on to council-managed personal budgets without providing them with choice and control. Though the [care and support White Paper](#), published in July 2012, confirmed the target – and the fact that it applied to users of ongoing, community-based support, it was dropped by the government in October 2012, [when care services minister Norman Lamb reduced the target to 70% by April 2013](#).

The [draft Care and Support Bill](#) includes plans to make personal budgets a mandatory part of all care plans, meaning they would apply to all council-funded users – including those in residential care – from the bill’s point of implementation. This has been pencilled in as April 2015.

Take-up across client groups. Direct payments have traditionally had a higher take-up among younger adults – notably people with learning or physical disabilities – than older people, however with the advent of personal budgets in England that gap has closed in terms of access to self-directed support in general. However, older people have proved much more likely than younger disabled adults to take their budget in council-managed form, rather than as a direct payment.

[Figures for 2011-12 from the Health and Social Care Information](#) showed that 85% of older personal budget users had an entirely council-managed budget, compared with 54% of younger disabled adults.

Take-up of personal budgets has also traditionally been lower among people with mental health problems, and there are longstanding concerns that not enough has been done to make personal budgets work for older people, people with mental health problems and those with the most complex needs; these issues have been raised in a number of reports.

Older people and people with mental health problems. There are ongoing efforts to boost take-up among people with mental health problems and older people.

Source: <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2007/01/05/direct-payments-personal-budgets-and-individual-budgets/>

Local organizations advocate for a cultural change. People get a leaflet of a 1000 pages. People who work at the Council ought to change their approach. It takes 12 weeks to have an assessment. The language that gets used is so bureaucratic and it scares people off. The process should be easier and quicker.

There are issues with defining what exactly PAs ought to do. Some PAs went to court to defend their rights against users and that is a gap that DPOs should be filling. The cuts have made things worse. Before, 25% of the budget was spent on activities and now less than 6% because of social workers' backlash. For older people, the limit of the budget is what it would cost being in a residential home. Currently, this amount misses out on 2 days a week. The national minimum pay for PA is GBP 7,55 per hour and GBP 9,40 is London living wage. This is a gross amount.

Meeting 3 Electoral Commission, Ana Doncic, Head of Policy and Policy Adviser, Tom Hawthorn, Head of Electoral Policy, Lizzie Tovey, Senior Electoral Adviser

This meeting was dedicated to policy and practical solutions conducive to an increase participation of PWDs in elections. Issues like accessibility of polling stations, accessibility of the voting process, tools to help different groups of PWDs were discussed, along with outreach efforts done by the Electoral Commission.

Figures show that it is a low PWD turnout at about 20% to 30% but also, more PWDs are voting then before. Things are generally good but not perfect. The Electoral Commission writes guidance, except for the spending guidance. They write guidance manuals for electoral administrators including disability advice. They further work with local authorities across the country.

There are 42000 polling stations in the UK and a very high accessibility rate.



- Before every election, polling station training is conducted
- Returning officers are in charge of training and polling station operation
- Electoral registration offices conduct a polling station review every 5 years, but actually every time there is an election they verify it. If a polling station no longer suitable, it can be changed. This happens rarely. The whole process of a polling station set up is very detailed, with guidelines, how to conduct a review

There are 2,500 electors for each district and there may not be very many buildings to choose from. Some funding for national elections is available to fix infrastructure. Electoral Commission set the performance standards but the choice is up to local authorities. There are village homes that are not 100% accessible but wherever possible, they must make it accessible.

All polling stations must have low level booth. For visual impairment, there is the device shown below and each polling station has a list printed in large block letters visibly posted. Assistance is available. Companion is allowed. There is a tactile voting device (TVD). For additional needs, electors can contact registration officers. For dyslexic people, materials can be printed in a different color or large print.

Provision of information for voters is not as good as it could be. It is difficult to change the wording. There is no provision in the guidance to keep track of PWDs.

Legal framework regulation relies on detailed rules in law. Returning officers run the process. If they fail, the result can be challenged and they will pay the cost for re-run. We provide very general standards and guidance. We do not regulate in a formal sense how it is run. If returning officers are grossly negligent, they could be prosecuted but never happened.

There are laws on equality and nondiscrimination and they apply to elections as they would to any other service. Those laws are regulated by Equal opportunities and Human Rights Commission.

UK Electoral Commission is funded by Parliament. They submit an annual plan and budget to the Parliament. Their budget is considered by a cross party committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. They scrutinize their performance. They are not dependent on the government and this means that they can disagree. There are 10 EC members and four are nominated by leaders of political parties. Six are independently appointed. They go through public appointment scrutiny process and then are appointed by the Queen. They come from business, politics, some are former MPs, some active, journalists, one is a former returning officer. Their term lasts 4 years and they can be reappointed. Roles of appointed and nominated members are non executive and strategic. EC members meet every month. They receive reports from staff. They approve proposals from 130 staff who report to them. There is a Chief Executive. EC is elections watchdog. They are not a management body. Formally, they have no direct authority to run elections. Regulating the money of political parties, they do have investigative and enforcement mandate. At the moment, they are investigating Conservative party.

What if voters make a mistake what is the process? If they vote by post and make a mistake, they can call and get new one but have to return the old one. This is also possible in elections.

Postal vote. Anyone can vote by post without any justification required. A procedure for voting by post changed it in 2006. There were a couple of incidents. Process now changed. Voters need to provide their date of birth and signature and send the request. When they receive their postal vote, they also sign and send date of birth and then votes are checked before inclusion. Software conducts checks and raises flags. For example, there are people who will sign the date instead of the place for signature, or people get married and change their name in between the request for postal vote and the actual vote, or their signature changes. They made a recommendation to government in 2014 to tell people when date of birth doesn't match to provide a new list. Postal vote request ought to be registered up to 12 days before elections. On polling day 10pm returning officer needs to have received postal votes. Free postage. About 15% or 16% vote by post.

Electoral registration officer - no central system. Different registers are maintained and people self-register. No automatic inclusion. Must register. On the election day, there is no need for voters to show ID in polling stations, no signature, no spray.

EC works with DPOs as trusted sources and partners. They provide information for PWDs in a range of formats. They discuss what sort of information is useful for a particular audience. For example, there is an easy read guide for referendum developed with Men cap Suzanne King. There was also a polling line on the voting date for PWDs to support them. Most questions referred to types of support available. There is also the institute of emergency proxy vote. **Emergency proxy** until 5 pm on the voting day. Only 8000 people across UK went in on referendum. It has to be the same polling station. This is often used by people suffering from a medical conditions and it then needs a supporting statement from a medical practitioner. It is up to the returning officer to decide and they can also apply permanent emergency proxy. There is no need for a solicitor - you can do it yourself. One person can be a proxy for max 2 people unless they are very close relatives.

Persons with intellectual disabilities can vote in the UK. Legal capacity is no restriction. Election legislation dates back in 1872. It has been added to. Based on an individual's own decision on whether they want to vote. Even if detained can vote there. Prisoners cannot vote in the UK.

EC tracks a generation of people who did not vote when they were younger and do not vote throughout their lives.

Anybody can be an election observer - domestic and international. You can apply to be a local observer. Accreditation lasts forever.



Are there many complaints?
Quite a few are coming to EC. There are no official complaints however. Not a huge scale. EC focuses on the mechanics and are not concerned with political issues, such as who has the right to vote.

[Meeting 4, Baroness Sheila Hollins, House of Commons](#)

Baroness Campbell, who was the intended meeting host, went down with a chest infection and Baroness Hollins kindly stepped in. House of Commons members are a non-

elected second chamber consisting of either people who have inherited their seat or in the last 50 years, by appointment. Usually, this is a gift from a departing PM when s/he stands down. Before, a quarter was non-party political as Baronesses Hollins and Campbell and now 1/5. The public often debates the fact that House of Commons members are not elected. In fact, their age ranges are wider than in the House of Commons. They have a better gender balance and more PWDs. There is a high proportion of minorities, there are religious leaders, even the first women bishop of the Anglican Church. Their role is to scrutinize legislation. They can spend hours and days discussing whereas the House of Commons insists on passing legislation. House of Lords is useful for impact analyses, including PWD issues. As a member of HoC, one can ask for a briefing from HoC or from Ministers. They also rely quite a bit on civil society organizations that have expertise in a specific area. Relationships of trust are key, because no politician can know enough about every area, even though they chose to speak on a limited number of issues, but still are not able to keep up the pace with policy and everyday realities on all of them. So, there is reliance but if these CSOs give them a bad briefing, they will never be used again because an HoC member cannot afford to have inaccurate information. Therefore, accurate and urgent information is needed and there is no time to always check it. That is why DRUK matters a lot as do some of the other DPOs. Sometimes, these organizations prepare speeches as well but the Baroness rarely gives a speech written by somebody else but notes still help.

Baroness Hollins works on mental disability issues quite a bit because of her autistic son. Her daughter also has a disability due to a spinal cord injury that provoked huge media frenzy and her daughter ended up in news coverage every day for a year. This is the reason why she entered politics – to deal with protection of privacy and assist people with disabilities and she speaks about press regulation. She belongs to APPGs on intellectual disabilities, autism, spine injuries and mental health. Baroness Hollins is a psychiatrist by profession and she came to Serbia ones with WHO. She thinks that UK Mental Disability Act of 2005 was an empowering policy. HoC has the ability to scrutinize whether legislation is implemented and to what effect through a post legislative committee.

Legislation can start in either chamber but the same policy cycle is always followed: there is a 1st and a 2nd reading. At Committee stage people bring amendments and government can dis/agree. A bill with amendments goes to the other chamber that again dis/agrees. It can send it back but in the

end, it is up to the HoC to decide as they are elected. HoL has many people with direct experience in issues they are most concerned with and want to talk about. Baroness Hollins is interested in policy because you need to persuade people by making relationships. However, you do not need everybody. Rather, you need a small group of people with the same objectives. Sometimes, you might have 3 groups doing similar things. Then you can create discourse. Sometimes you can have a dialogue and get to know people. It is a very personal process and you cannot bombard MPs with e-mails. You need to write directly, to make it personal or else nobody will read it. Parliament can be a very anonymous place. It is nice to have likeminded people sitting around the table. Richness of story matters. You need to know enough to speak authoritatively. It takes a few people – maybe 5 and that is better than having many knowing a bit about the issue.

The APPG on Disability gathers officers from different parties and at least 1 from the government and from opposition from both chambers. In total, there is a minimum of 12 members. The APPG leader is Lisa Cameron a clinical psychologist. APPG Secretariat is often provided by an NGO but official membership is reserved for MPs. Nevertheless, other people play a big part. MPs can invite ministers and DRUK can attend general meetings. Observers can ask questions. One time, they had 600 observers and 67 members.



It is hard to qualify general tendencies, as some things are going backwards and others are not. On the positive side, there is government commitment to closing disability employment gap. Still, they are not thinking about implications for all PWD groups. They need to know how to do it. It is a naive idea that if they reduce income by GBP 30 PWDs will work. Issues with people who are not fit to work. Very different approaches are needed but not always available.

Ms. Dubravka Filipovski, MP greeted Baroness Hollins on behalf of the Serbian Parliament and PDGC. She noted that Serbia regularly considers CEDAW and reports on the Conventions on the right of children and CRPD. Serbia monitors implementation of the Commissioner’s recommendations and reports annually on the progress achieved.

Meeting 5, Karen Lumley, MP and Chair of APPG on Serbia

She has a strong connection to Serbia through Westminster Foundation for Democracy. She likes Novi Sad and Nis. She has done a lot of work in Bosnia but also in Serbia with DSS, G17+ and SPS as a political consultant and strategist. She worked closely with Vlada Ilic, Bosnian PM in their general elections. Last February, she helped SPS get better relations with sister parties.



Dubravka Filipovski asked about opportunities that Ms Lumley for an improved cooperation and for her experiences in ensuring parliamentary oversight.

A lot of work in Serbia is based upon the UK example. In the UK, when the bell rings, MPs have 8 minutes to get to the

room or else the door closes. In 6 years, she missed only 2 votes. There is a think majority of 12 and this becomes a major issue then and MPs have to apologize to Chief Whip. Politics in the UK are very disciplined. MPs come from across the country. In Serbia, they mostly come from Belgrade. She originates from Redige and represents 8000 people. Most weekends, she does her constituency work there.

Women in politics are better off now but still not representative of the population. Politics are geared to men. As of recently, however, attempt are being made to end sooner. Her daughter is in politics as well but she tells people what to do. Ms. Lumley is member of 20 or 30 parliamentary groups. This has a lot to do with ambassadors. It is not a great amount of work however.

In the UK, people can learn about disability issues from Serbia. She did an interview for News Night and the reporter was PWD. The Parliament building is really inaccessible so he had to come through the kitchen. They had to plan a route. UK is not a great model in this regard. The Welsh Ammebly is.

Gordana Rajkov stated that UK remains a good model, however on policy and strategy and outreach to PWDs.

Lumley stated that, as anywhere, the disability community is not united. It is hard to get people (and money) behind issues. One needs to persuade colleagues.

Meeting 6 Dr Lisa Cameron, MP and APPG on Disability Chair



Dr Lisa Cameron introduced modus operand of the APPG on Disability that she chairs. In addition to actual MPs, former MPs have a role and can come along. The APPG is linked to government policy. For example, with government commitment on closing the employment gap for PWDs, they are conducting an inquiry and holding evidence sessions to see what the results and prospects are in practice. They rely on DRUK quite a bit. They try to initiate changes and improve conditions For example,

underground is not sully accessible and they want to fix that. Also, they advocated for a major renovation project in Parliament making it accessible. This is not easy and it is costly for such an old building. They have open calls for internships.

APPPG on Disability is a priority for Dr Cameron, along with climate change. She draws on expertise easily as she knows the actors and stakeholders. She also holds Party conference for PWD.



UK Parliament holds weekly questions and answers sessions with the Prime Minister. MP names to ask questions are selected by lottery. They further hold info sessions to increase level of appreciation for an issue in HoL. Relationships with Equality and Human Right Commission are solid but can be approved upon. There are no formal relationships.



In Serbia, Ms. Tijana Milošević explained that this relationship is very important because they report on PWD issues, for example in 2011 and more than



20% of complaints to Commissioner for Equality are related to PWDs. The relationship with Parliament is thus very important and Parliament elects the Commissioner for Equality Protection.

In the UK there is a Minister on Disability (not a PWD). Everything is now in flux. Dr Cameron is eager to come to Serbia and/or have the delegation visit Scotland. The Serbian Parliament has excellent working relationships with the Scottish Parliament owing to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

Meeting 7, Simeon Barnes, Paul Wrachkam and Derry Bickentley from the 3 boroughs, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham, and Representative from Action Disability Kensington and Chelsea ADKC and from Carers Network and Ines Bulic, ENIL



This meeting was about pulling of local resources under austerity while attending to maintain high quality levels of service that puts service users in the center through Action Disability Kensington and Chelsea¹. Resource information has been developed by the 3 boroughs, Westminster,

¹ <http://adkc.org.uk/> and from Carers Network <http://carers-network.co.uk/>

Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham². It is web based and called People First. These local authorities were asked to do better with less in a three borough model. The area covers around 600,000 people. It is the 2nd largest urban area in the UK. It covers a broad range of situations, with some of the richest people and 3 miles away from them are people who have an 11 years shorter life span.

The Care Act 7 years ago asked people to work with the law, ensure integrated services provision. For example health and welfare used to be very separated and obviously the needs are not. Fixed budget challenged the process. By 2020, the goal is to full integration. PWDs are navigators in the process. The approach is asset-based. It starts by what people can do for themselves first.

Jenny Hurst, personal budgets coordinator said that some of their services are paid by the Council. They have lifelong learning and Access projects. They support users in accessing services. Local user groups and positive rights action groups are designed by users. The Council asked them to be involved in commissioning of services and personalization in line with individual needs, like coproduction.

Sheila from Independent Charity Fulham supports carers through socialisation and support groups. They contribute to confidence building and training and they raise funds. City of London contributes. There are diverse markets for social care in the UK and different funding streams. The difference between voluntary and private sector organizations is diminishing. It is dehumanizing on the other hand to only have huge organizations but small is also inefficient. They are now seeking balance.

Simeon Barnes stated that 35% of all local authority spending is on social welfare, i.e. GBP 14 billion. For them, feedback is very important from PWDs and DPOs alike. They are seeking the so called 'John Lewis standard' where employees are also shareholders. The Care Act passed on April 1, 2015 is the most significant change over the past 15 years. More than 20 sets of regulations supporting the Act were passed. They are now involving PWDs more. The wellbeing principle and outcome based personal care is in focus.



There is no hierarchy of needs. Support is not paternalistic. PWDs are encouraged to take risks. „When people disagree with you – ignore them but when people who smile do not do anything, focus on them.

Sheila spoke about the Time bank project where carers can share skills.

Post study tour de-brief

A debrief was organized for the delegation. All members were asked to respond to the following four questions

1. During the study visit to London, the strongest professional impression for me was...
2. I think that it is possible to implement in Serbia, whether fully or upon modification and/or adaptation the following idea
3. In the context of SPPPWD Project, I would like to see us do the following

² <http://www.peoplefirstinfo.org.uk/>

4. With regards to public policy, regulation and rules for PWD participation in election process, I think that it is important to modify/amend the following

Responses are enclosed in Annex 2.1. and they will inform planning of next steps and additional post study visit materials.

As soon as the PDGC is re-established after the Parliament operation resumes, an info session will be organized for PDGC members and other interested MPs. In addition, the SPPPWD Project will organize a press conference in order to share insights from the study tour.

Post study visit materials developed

So far, the post study visit materials developed include:

- New project brief for PDGC members
- Study visit information for MPs
- A list of priorities in supporting participation of PWDs in elections developed for ERWG and Republican Election Commission
- Examples of tree borough services provision in Serbian
- Brief for ERWG on elections in UK

Study visit report

This Study visit Report is a work product in partial fulfillment of Milestone 3 requirements, along with Annex 1, Training Report.

Annex 2.1. Impressions from London by members of the Delegation

Name	During the study visit to London, the strongest professional impression for me was	I think that it is possible to implement in Serbia, whether fully or upon modification and/or adaptation the following idea	In the context of SPPPWD Project, I would like to see us do the following	With regards to public policy, regulation and rules for PWD participation in election process, I think that it is important to modify/amend the following
Tijana Milošević	The finding that persons who are deprived of their professional capacity can still vote and that they enjoy full support of Electoral Commission in this process and polling station personnel (though I personally would prefer if nobody was ever deprived of professional capacity, because in my opinion that counters the concept of human rights, especially right to equality.	Polling station accessibility, handbooks and guidelines for members of electoral commission operating on polling stations and design of an easy to use manual for persons who want to vote, naturally to be produced with DPO support. Also, postal vote introduction for persons who cannot come to their polling station for different reasons.	Commissioner for equality protection and me personally are strongly supporting changes related to regulation on depriving people of professional capacity which makes it impossible for them to enjoy most important rights, including right to vote. I think that, in future, owing to our shared efforts, we should influence changes in legislation. Until then, we should work on making it possible for PWDs who have a right to vote to exercise their right in practice, both through strengthening their motivation to vote and by making polling stations accessible.	In my view, we have a solid legal framework (except in relation to depriving some persons of their professional capacity), and I think that polling stations, as well as other public premises must be accessible, because otherwise they are being discriminated against, and we do have the Law on mobility with guide dog, and I think that those rules ought to be respected as they are already included in laws. I very much like guidelines designed by the Electoral Commission UK, and on our end obviously, people managing elections are not aware of antidiscrimination legislation and other legal provisions and bylaws related to participation of PWDs in election process, and so I think that a brief guidance that would remind them of their obligations would be useful.
Dubravka Filipovski	Meeting with Electoral Committee representatives, with Sheila Hollins from the House of Lords, Dr Lisa Cameron, MP from Scotland and representatives of local government.	Transparent self-adhesive foil with numbers as an assistive device for the visually impaired so that they can circle the right number on the list, postal vote, accessibility for persons with disabilities that is so notable everywhere in London, better budget planning of inter/sectoral commissions in local governments.	Advancing legal framework and making them more responsive to PWD needs, better control of implementation of laws and more intense field work including documenting issues in implementation of laws in practice, establishing better communication between DPOs and MPs, social	Economic empowerment and strengthening of PWDs, closing the unemployment gap, improving access to transport, and inclusive education.

policies and measures conducive to implementation of PWD rights based on human rights approaches and not charity and humanitarian action.

Sofija Mandić	<p>The fact that institutions - parliament, MPs in both chambers, electoral commission, local governments – know what their job is in relation to PWD rights. Open talk about what could be better, without a need to paint an enhanced image of reality. It was a pleasure to see a system that, through ups and downs, seeks to achieve progress with regards to accessibility. We have never encountered a negation of the PWD rights to independent living and equality. We have also not seen an attitude that implementation of basic PWD rights depends on an individual's good will, humanity or personal understanding. That is very different from the way things are in Serbia.</p>	<p>I think that it is possible to implement many ideas. A majority of professional staff in Electoral Commission (selected in a competitive process), professional staffers who take on the polling station management responsibilities in multiple election cycles, fixed polling stations (with occasional accessibility and adequacy audit).It is possible to work on direct cooperation of institutions and media with DPOs – like in the UK where EC cooperates with Man Cap and BBC to promote materials for persons with mental disabilities. There's also the idea of postal vote, as well as practical solutions that are easily applied for voting by visually impaired.</p>	<p>Propose legal amendments with PDGC support that would ensure at least these two things – greater accessibility of polling stations in the next elections and broader understanding of accessibility of the election process. So far, if anything, only physical accessibility was considered with regards to polling stations, with limited information even in this regard. It is necessary to make elections accessible for diverse types of disabilities.</p>	<p>Many changes and amendments are needed in order to make the election process in Serbia fully accessible for PWDs. For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. making postal vote possible in some circumstances (including disability) 2. making voting in residential institutions possible 3. Making independent voting possible for visually and hearing impaired and blind persons. 4. Fixing polling stations in accessible buildings or making it possible for PWDs to vote in accessible parts of buildings with multiple polling stations.
Mimica Živadinović	<p>Work done by Philip Connolly, DRUK contributing to a smooth flow of the study visit. A very balanced approach by Baroness Hollins, a very exuberant Karen Lumley and the most cordial reception by Lisa Cameron. I did not take part in the visit to EC but all of the other actors have tried hard to give us “their piece of the puzzle”.</p>	<p>At least MPs- members of PDGC should be in contact with leading DPOs in order to get timely and accurate information on PWD issues.</p>	<p>For the end of the project, invite one of the MPs who received us during the study visit.</p>	<p>I was not at that meeting but I heard an interesting idea about postal vote - maybe that.</p>
Gordana Rajkov	<p>DRUK's modus operandi, especially Philip Connolly's ideas on changing narratives, building self-reliance and</p>	<p>APPG operation including reliance on DPOs or individual activists as consultants to help prep and brief</p>	<p>Re-establishment of PDGC using the experiences acquired from DRUK and Lisa Cameron and to maintain contact</p>	<p>If it was possible to change electoral legislation and introduce postal vote that would significantly ease PWD</p>

seizing resources. I was impressed by DPO representatives, especially on the 1st day DPOs from Islington, and the overall analysis of dis/advantages of direct payment system.

parliamentarians for their public appearances in Parliament, related of course to disability issues. Also, I think that it is a good idea to include former APPGD members in the group's work even after they are no longer MPs. In this way, resources are used more effectively and MP links to DPOs are improved.

with and cooperation between the two parliamentary groups. I would also like us to try after another careful reading of what we have heard from Philip, to find a way to motivate DPOs to become more active politically. I found the presentation by three local municipalities interesting relating to support services and recognition of volunteer work, i.e. care that is provided free of charge by PWD family members, resources and activities contributing to their strengthening and cooperation. Maybe we can introduce that concept in our welfare system.

participation in election process, including accessibility of polling stations and polling materials.

Ivanka Jovanović

The fact that I have gained insight into disability movement in the UK and their operation, i.e. their cooperation with the state from both the DPO and the state's perspective. That we were able to meet with MPs and EC representatives, as well as the umbrella organization advocating PWD rights which is most similar to NOOIS. Seeing what local DPOs can do their strengths in resolving issues locally.

Practical application with regards to voting for visually impaired, postal vote and voting at home but with less restrictive rules. The right of people deprived of professional capacity to vote.

Reestablishment of PDGC in Parliament and its' institutionalization so that it does not depend on good will of ruling structures (whether it will be formed or not). Strengthening of local organizations in 5 cities, at least in the context of raising awareness on their strengths and importance of cooperation with local governments.

Everything related to good practice in voting, or, more precisely, the practical example of the device assisting visually impaired persons, Postal vote and vote from home, but with less restrictive rules (e.g. extend deadline for voting at home) - Granting right to vote to persons deprived of professional capacity.

Maja Pejčić

That is relevant to highest level policy making, their good organization and people making up these institutions, their commitment to work, but also their working conditions. For me, the most relevant visit was to Electoral Commission and visit to local

the following idea, or rather experience of the Electoral Commission, related to making it possible for PWDs in inaccessible polling stations to register and vote outside of the polling station premises, then organizing a call centre on the election day for clarification regarding

To seek greatest possible inclusion in all processes regarding social life and I will try to implement it regarding the election process.

Already stated under 2. although I think that our regulations are more precise but one should always aspire to full implementation with regards to these vulnerable groups

governments.

Sanja
Nikolin

A very fine and precise work done by Philip Connolly, DRUK on public policies and cooperation with decision makers as well as local DPOs in a complex web of relations of institutions and individuals. At the end of the day, that web, despite the increasingly complex rules, interacts based on personal contacts and trust that is not based on the fact that people know each other but rather on the reliability of information that they exchange with each other. That system is good because every actor is motivated to the maximum to remain useful and active. I was equally impressed by the visionary position by Philip Connolly and the fact that I see CIL very close to that position in their reflections. I was delighted by the presentations of local government representatives.

voting or polling stations. Possibly, in specific situations, allow postal vote. Many things can be changed. The most important things worth changing pertain to PWD participation in elections without restrictions, and postal vote is an interesting concept for PWDs, as well as different support mechanisms and assistive devices to help PWDs vote. With regards to Electoral Commission, it is important that it seeks to remove barriers on in a proactive manner although the formal role it plays is in fact less strong than the role played by REC. I think that we are well on the way to making PDGC very similar to APPGD and that is encouraging and good. The study visit convinced me that we are on the right path.

Set up a meeting with REC asap to introduce the materials we prepared ahead of the last elections that are aligned with UK practice. Launch a public debate on right to vote for all and accessibility of polling stations, perhaps with support from our UK hosts. I think that we have to find space for presentations to local governments/DPOs in target local communities in addition to a national press conference on what we learned and our future plans. It is very important to stay in touch with our hosts and to act as intermediaries for peer contacts, e.g. among local governments, PDGC and APPG members, etc.

Clearer and more cohesive support to REC in gradual increase of accessible polling stations based on a specific plan and target values, postal vote and vote in residential institutions, debate on relationship between universal right to vote and deprivation of professional capacity.