

# Introduction:

The Disability Information and Consultation Bureau (DICB) was established in Vilnius in 1994. It is a community-based, non-governmental organisation, co-ordinating and utilising resources already available in Lithuania.

## **Background Information:**

Since Lithuania regained its independence in 1991, there have been many changes in the area of disability. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and parents of children with disability organisations have been established, new legislation has been passed incorporating the needs of the disabled and new services have been established promoting the decentralisation of large institutions. However, the community in Lithuania still has a great many physical and attitudinal barriers to overcome as far as persons with disability are concerned. Integration and acceptance of persons with disabilities is not common practice. In order for persons with disability to be integrated into the community there needs to be an increase in community awareness of disability. Effective information collection and dissemination is a relatively new concept in Lithuania. People have difficulty in sharing knowledge, utilising resources, and co-ordinating action in order to achieve the best possible results. It is for these reasons that the DICB was established.

# Mission:

The DICB's mission is to develop and maintain community awareness of disabilities in Lithuania. This we aim to do by firstly:

- ***Informing*** and ***educating*** the community about disability.
- ***Changing attitudes*** towards persons with disabilities.
- ***Facilitating acceptance*** of persons with disabilities.
- ***Advocating*** for equal rights of persons with disabilities.
- ***Promoting*** co-operation between the different sectors of the community who address the needs of persons with disability.
- ***Promoting*** the independence of persons with disability so that they take responsibility for their own lives.

# Staff:

The staff of the Disability Information and Consultation Bureau consists of the following persons:

**Gaila Muceniekas** - Director

**Birute Poškiene** - Project Co-ordinator

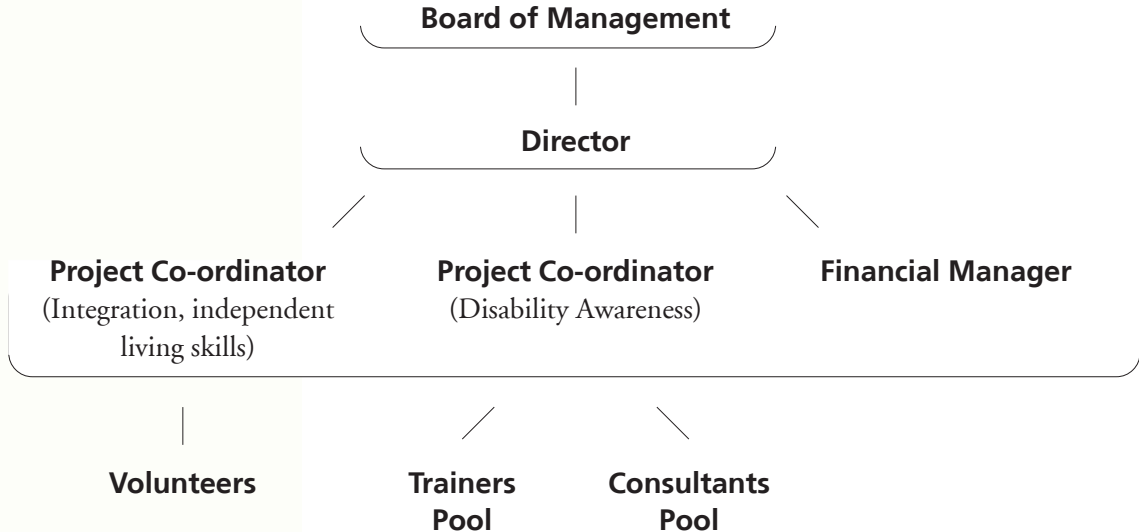
**Jokūbas Tūras** - Project Co-ordinator

**Mindaugas Gataveckas** - Financial Manager

In addition, there is a pool of qualified trainers (8 trainers) among who are persons with disability, who were trained over the years by the DICB and who are called upon to assist in conducting various training programs.

Furthermore, there is a pool of volunteers (10 volunteers) who provide assistance in implementing various projects, disability awareness campaigns and so on.

# Structure:



# Activities for the Year 2003:

In the year 2003 the activities of the DICB were various with the main focus being on the changing of attitudes towards persons with disability. Closely related to this is the concept of promoting co-operation and dialogue between all institutions and individuals interacting with persons with disability. For this purpose the following activities were undertaken and continue to be the priority areas of work for the DICB:

- Consultations
- Training
- Publications
- Other services
- Project implementation

# Consultations:

## Individuals:

- Persons with disabilities;
- Family members of persons with disability;
- Specialists working with persons with disability.

### **Main areas of interest:**

- Service provision:- what, where, who etc.;
- Legal issues: concessions, pensions etc.;
- Disability: what is, social and medical implications;
- Compensatory equipment and how to make environments more accessible to persons with disability.

## Organizations:

- Disability NGOs, both international and local;
- Government: municipal and ministry level;
- Private companies.

### **Main areas of interest:**

- Co-operation;
- Disability etiquette;
- Service provision: what, where, who etc.;
- Proposal writing.

# Trainings:

- persons with disabilities;
- family members;
- specialists;
- NGOs.

## **Main topics of interest:**

- Disability awareness;
- Disability Etiquette;
- Proposal Writing;
- Project Management;
- Strategic Planning;
- Advocacy;
- How to develop self-help groups.

# Publications:

- *“Disability Etiquette: Communication with Persons with Disability”;*
- *“Legal Tips for Persons with Disability and Their Family Members”;*
- *“You are Not Alone! Self-Help Groups. A Practical Guide to Setting Up and Running Self-Help Groups”;*
- *European Days Calendar 2004.*

## Summary of Services Provided by DICB in 2003

Service	Clients/Participants
Consultations	124
Training programs	336
Publications	4
Implemented projects	4
Response to Phone Enquiries	728
Students Completed Practical Experience at DICB	2
Library Service	83

# Project Implementation:

The following projects have been undertaken, a brief description of each follows:

- *“European Days: Steps Towards Introducing European Union Traditions”*;
- *Disability Etiquette: Better Understanding of One Another*;
- *Developing Entrepreneurship Among Women With Disabilities in the Baltic States*;
- *“Integrated Society for All”*.

# “DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONG WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES IN THE BALTIC STATES”

**Project Funded By:** International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Government of Flanders

**Duration:** 6 months

**Implementation:** July 2003 - December, 2003

**Partners:**

International Labour Organization (Switzerland),  
ASPAZIJA Latvian Association of Disabled Women and  
Estonian Union of Disabled Women.

## Aims Of the Project:

- To gain a better insight into the situation of women with disabilities and mothers of children with disability and the constraints that they face;
- To collect information on the situation of women with disabilities and mothers of children with disability in Lithuania;
- To compile case study information on self-employed women with disabilities in Lithuania.

## Project Description:

The project was the first step towards identifying the needs of both women with disability and mothers of children with disability. For all women participating in the project, the challenge of earning a living whilst coping with disability is part of their day-to-day life.

A group of 12 women with a range of disabilities (physical, visual impairments, hearing impairments and mental illness) were enlisted to collect information. They were trained to carry out interviews of women, as well as gather in depth information about women with disability who have started their own entrepreneurial activities.

In total 250 women with disabilities and mothers of children with disability (physical disability – 100; visual impairments – 50; hearing impairments – 50; mental illness – 25; and mothers of children with mental disability – 25) were interviewed. Four questionnaires were used for the survey process, which were initially produced by the ILO and were adapted to the Lithuanian context with the joint efforts of surveyors and members of the Technical Steering Committee.

In addition, case studies of 10 women currently operating an enterprise were collected. This information is in depth and draws on how women began their business, constraints and successes, as well as recommendations for women with disability considering starting their own business.

Following the survey process a report was prepared incorporating the results of the survey and also recommendations on how to improve the opportunities for women with disability to engage in entrepreneurial activities

## Results:

- A starting point for planning future activities for women with disability and mothers of children with disability;
- Insights into the situation of women with disability and mothers of children with disability in Lithuania;
- Survey report with recommendations and a series of 10 case studies of women with disability currently operating their own business.

## Recommendations of Survey:

- Such surveys need to be conducted on a regular basis.
- Analysis is needed of where women with disability work today, as such information is not available.
- Necessary to begin training programs for women with disability from basics such as self-analysis, developing self-esteem and confidence building.
- Differentiated training programs are needed for persons with specific disabilities and for those women who have acquired and inherent disabilities.
- Information needs to be made available, which is user-friendly, about work opportunities, career advice, support available from the government in setting up a business and also in seeking employment.
- There is a need to develop information packs on starting a business “*ABC for Women with Disability Wanting to Start a Business*”.

## Next Steps:

- Design of strategy for entrepreneurship development among women with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities.
- Publication of the report and case studies in Lithuanian and English.
- Dissemination of information about the results of the project.
- Feedback and follow-up with participants of the survey.

## Feedback from the Project Participants:

*“This is the first time that I can remember that somebody asked me and not my mother what I want for my future. I felt that they were really interested in me.”*

*“I had never thought about some of the questions that I was asked. I had not thought about what I would like to do with my life, work, studies and the thought of starting a business had never crossed my mind.”*

*“I was pleased to participate in this project. I could share with other women with disability my experiences in running a business. I hope that this will be an inspiration for others to do something similar.”*

*“Interviewing other women with disability helped me to look at my life from another perspective. After interviewing some 30 or more women I started to appreciate my life, as it was, my independence. Conducting the interviews allowed me to test myself, it gave me new skills and greater confidence. It is a pity that it has finished now.”*

# “DISABILITY ETIQUETTE – BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF ONE ANOTHER”

**Project Funded By:** EU Phare Access Programme 2000

**Duration:** 10 months

**Implementation:** December 2002 – September 2003

## Aims of Project:

- To attempt to breakdown the barriers, inequality and existing attitude of pity and fear towards persons with disability;
- To develop together with persons with disability a code of practice, disability etiquette which can be applied when interacting with persons with various disabilities;
- To prepare a group of trainers with disability who could design and implement disability awareness programs;
- To provide professionals and service providers, who are in regular contact with persons with disability with disability etiquette skills and basic information about various disabilities, including social and medical implications so that they can apply these to their work;
- To publish a user-friendly guide to communicating with persons with disability.

## Project Description:

In Lithuania more attention has been placed on addressing the needs and rights of persons with disability, an understanding that persons are a part of society has made it easier for persons with disability to integrate into society. However, the majority of people, including professionals, do not know how to communicate with persons with disability and think that they need to be pitied, feared or ignored.

The first stage of the project involved the development of a team of trainers with disability. This involved an intensive training program with theoretical and practical components, extensive consultations and individual training based on specific needs of participants.

Together with a group of persons with disability a “*Disability Etiquette*” for communicating with persons with disability was created. It included verbal and written communication, as well as developing an accessible environment for persons with disability. This formed the basis of a training program, which was field tested on a group of 45 social workers from the Vilnius Municipality Social Welfare Departments, using persons with disability as co-trainers. As part of the training program site visits to different services for persons with disability were organized, so that they could put into practice their newly acquired skills.

In addition, a booklet entitled “*Disability Etiquette: Communication with Persons with Disability*” was produced. This is accompanied with posters and stickers promoting the integration of persons with disability into society from a positive perspective. Furthermore, a lawyer with disability produced a booklet on “Legal Advice for Persons with Disability and Their Family Members”.

## Results:

- A team of trainers with disability was developed with trainers gaining a minimum of 40 hours training experience.
- A group of 45 social workers from the Vilnius Municipality Social Welfare Department received training in “*Disability Etiquette: How Better to Communicate with Persons with Disability*”, including first-hand experience of communicating with persons with disability.
- A booklet on “*Legal Advice for Persons with Disability and Their Family Members*” was prepared and published by a disabled lawyer.
- A “*Disability Etiquette: How Better to Communicate with Persons with Disability*” training program was developed with the input of persons with disability.
- A dialogue between persons with disability and professionals from different sectors was entered into and is now the basis for future co-operation when addressing issues of concern to persons with disability.
- A code of practice for interacting with persons with disability was established between service providers and persons with disability taking into account the needs of both able and disabled persons. This has been published as a booklet.

## Next Steps:

- The project can be replicated throughout Lithuania. The feedback from the Vilnius Municipality Social Welfare Department was such that this program is essential to all persons coming into contact with persons with disability, not only social workers and home support workers.
- The training module could be adapted to cater to different groups of society, namely service providers e.g. hotels, banking personnel and shop assistants.
- The pool of trainers with disability will be called upon in future to assist with similar such trainings in order to refresh and maintain their skills.
- Each of the participating disability organizations plans to use the skills of their trainers in running similar such training sessions for their members and staff of the different centers that they co-operate with.

## Feedback from Project Participants:

*“I never thought that I would be able to stand in front of an audience and talk about my disability to complete strangers. However, I broke down this barrier thanks to the “training of trainers” program – I tested myself and overcame my fears.”*

*“By talking about how we want people to act with us we are not only helping ourselves, but we are helping those people to better understand us, the world we live in and our needs. To understand that we are not that different.”*

*I never thought that people with disability could be so open, so warm and willing to share their experiences, to say no this is how I want you to act with me, how I want you to respect my rights. Hearing this from persons with disabilities themselves adds more meaning to those words”.*

*“The site visits to the different centers allowed me to see first hand the centers where we refer our clients and the services that they receive. I had different opinions about those centers, some met my expectations but others are far from the image that they create and how they promote their services for persons with disability.”*

## “EUROPEAN DAYS – STEPS TOWARDS INTRODUCING EUROPEAN UNION TRADITIONS”

**Project Funded By:** EU Small Grants Programme – European Community External Aid, EU Delegation Lithuania

**Duration:** 12 months

**Implementation:** November 2002 - October 2003

### Aims of Project:

- To increase the visibility of the European Union in Lithuania through introducing greater awareness of proclaimed “European Days”;
- To provide NGOs in Lithuania working on issues identified by European Days with new skills in marketing, fund-raising and advocacy and to apply these in organizing European Days on a local level.
- To encourage NGOs advocating or representing the rights of different target groups to run activities and events to observe the European Day, which promotes independence, equality of opportunity and full participation and can increase members’ skills and confidence.

- To produce a calendar, which highlights all the proclaimed European Days and which promotes the activities of the European Union and NGOs in Lithuania.
- To use the awareness and support among the wider community, gained through community activities promoting European Days, to encourage improvements to laws, policies and services, which will permanently improve the lives of different target groups.

## **Project Description:**

The majority of NGOs in Lithuania are concerned with local issues, with addressing immediate questions, providing support and services. Not many NGOs have the necessary skills to promote their organizations, the issues or the target groups that they represent. They are concerned about the impact of Lithuania's integration into the EU for their organizations and their target groups. They have limited knowledge of the EU, its practices and legislation, as well as the opportunities that membership of the EU will bring.

In order for NGOs to have a higher profile it is necessary to improve the skills of the NGO members. For this purpose, during the course of the project a series of trainings on marketing, fundraising and advocacy was organized for four groups of NGOs: - disability, women's, youth and children's. Other activities included implementation of pilot projects drawing on the newly acquired skills and implemented in co-operation with other NGOs, as well as facilitated discussions about EU legislation and how this can be applied in NGO's advocacy campaigns.

As part of the project information was collected on all European Union proclaimed European Days, such as “Day of Disabled Persons”, “Children’s Rights Day” and so on. This information formed the basis of a calendar, which was published using pictures produced by children participating in the EU Days Arts competition.

The project was developed based on the proclaimed European Days, which provide an annual focus for NGOs campaign work, bringing pressure on different levels of the community through advocacy and awareness building.

## **Results:**

- A training program for non-governmental organizations was developed including the topics of fund-raising, marketing and advocacy taking into account the specific needs of participating organizations.
- A calendar was produced, which draws attention to the European proclaimed days and Lithuanian NGOs working on these issues.
- The European Union gained a higher profile in Lithuania, firstly among the NGO sector, secondly their membership and thirdly, the broader community.
- Fifty NGOs participated in a series of three trainings covering the most pertinent topics for NGOs today – fund-raising, marketing and advocacy.
- Participating NGOs applied new acquired skills to pilot projects conducted as part of the overall project:

- Children's NGOs organized a one-day event "Children's NGO Day". It is hoped that this will become a traditional event in years to come. They developed a symbol (paper airplane) which symbolizes the hopes of children, which was launched during the event and also produced a CD and information pack about children's NGOs.
- Youth NGOs produced a notepad, which introduces the concept of 2% contribution by individuals to NGOs and introduces their NGO and its activities.
- Disability NGOs produced fliers on the 2% contribution by individuals to NGOs
- Women's NGOs established an informal network of women's NGOs, which will share common projects, experiences and expertise.

## Next Steps:

- A training program in marketing, fund-raising and advocacy was developed, which is applicable for all NGOs regardless of the issues or the target groups with which they work. This program will be offered to other NGOs.
- The DICB will continue to provide consultations to organizations, which participated in the project.
- Requests have been made by participating organizations to develop a follow-up program with more advanced topics.

## Feedback from Project Participants:

*“The information presented in the trainings was clear, easy to understand and the practical exercises were so informative and interesting. I used to go back to work and even at home talk about them and I even tried some out on my colleagues.”*

*“It is not often that you will meet an organisation, which so willingly and openly shares its information and expertise. The DICB is not only interested in strengthening their own organisation, but also in helping other organisations to become more effective, oriented and to follow their lead in sharing knowledge and experiences.”*

*“Not only did we learn from the pilot projects, but we also received some concrete products, which our organisation can use as marketing tools. We are only a small organisation and we really didn't think that our participation in the project would mean that our organisation would get more than the learning and skills. But we did. Today we have a notepad, which is produced by us, we can bravely go to funders – we are better equipped.”*

*“We had the opportunity through this project to implement an idea, which I have had for some time now – a coalition of women's NGOs. If not for this project and the pilot project, this idea would have remained an idea and would have surfaced I don't know when. Today, this idea is a reality, not only for me, but for other women's organisations who apparently had also been thinking in this direction.”*

# “INTEGRATED SOCIETY FOR ALL”

**Project Funded By:** Democracy Commission Small Grants, US Embassy Vilnius

**Duration:** 12 months

**Implementation:** June 2003 – July 2004

## Aims of Project:

- To ensure the participation of persons with disability and all stakeholders of the development of social service infrastructures in dialogues to determine solutions that meet or reflect everyone's needs.
- To develop the skills of persons with disability, leaders of disability organizations and decision-makers to effectively communicate, negotiate and co-operate in addressing common issues of concern;
- To provide professionals with the necessary skills in order to breakdown the barriers to communicating with persons with disability so that both sides feel comfortable and at ease;
- To initiate and promote cross-sectoral co-operation in addressing issues of common concern;
- To increase the capacity of disability organizations to participate in decision-making processes and to be more transparent to their memberships and community at large.

## Project Description:

Today in Lithuania there are many NGOs, which represent the interests and rights of persons with disability. However, the tendency is that the membership is often passive, does not participate in decision-making processes and relies strongly on the leadership of the organization to advocate on their behalf.

The project is being implemented together with three disability organizations in Lithuania: - Lithuanian Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired, Lithuanian association of the Disabled and the Lithuanian Welfare Society for Persons with Mental Disability “Viltis”. Representatives of these organizations together with representatives from regional municipal institutions, the private sector, social welfare and educational institutions will undergo a co-operative planning process. The aim of which is to develop a locally based social services infrastructure for persons with disability, which takes into account the needs of the entire community.

Each participating region has undergone a 2 day “disability etiquette” training program for persons working on a regular basis with persons with disability. In addition, persons with disability were trained in advocacy and public speaking. This will be followed by a co-operative planning process in 2004. This will involve developing a portrait of the current situation for persons with disability in their region, what are the issues of concern today and a priority list of issues that can be addressed in the short and long-term will be developed. Several priority issues in each region will be discussed and a plan developed with concrete steps to be implemented, roles and responsibilities. This will form the basis for concrete pilot projects, which should be implemented over the following months.

At the conclusion of the project it is planned to organize a conference to share lessons learned and share experiences. A case studies booklet will be produced describing each process, good practices, recommendations and results.

## **Results to Date:**

During the first 6 months of the project the following results have been achieved:

- A group of 60 professionals have acquired skills on how to communicate with persons with disability, how to take into account their access needs. These newly acquired skills can be applied to their daily work activities;
- A group of facilitators have been trained in the co-operative planning process. They will apply these skills in the framework of the project and in future will be able to manage co-operative planning processes in their region.
- Persons with disability have been trained and gained experience in public speaking and advocating for their own rights.

## **Expected Results at Conclusion of the Project:**

- A structured and systematized means of entering into dialogue for multi-party issues will have been developed;

- Each of the participating organizations will have developed a portrait of their organization, the environment in which they operate, as well as short and long term goals of their organization.
- Persons with disability in each of the three regions will be more active and participatory in decision-making processes, they will no longer be so passive in voicing their opinions, needs and problems.
- A dialogue between all persons working directly and indirectly with persons with disability will have been developed and should form the basis for long-term co-operation.

### **Feedback from Project Participants:**

*“I have been working with persons with disability for several years and this is the first time that I have heard about how to better communicate with persons with disability. There are so many things, which I will be able to apply to my work”.*

*“The disability etiquette program should be introduced to all academic programs of persons who work with persons with disability. There is so much that we take for granted or do not even think about when communicating with persons with disability. If I had participated in such a training program before starting work I would not have been so anxious, frightened of offending or hurting a person with disability”.*

*“All of our members should go through this process. Then maybe they will have a better understanding of how much time, effort, planning, listening and advocating for our rights is necessary if we want to achieve changes in the way we, people with a physical disability, live today.”*

# Our achievements to date:

- Integration of children with disability into cultural events. Christmas Fair at the Lithuanian National Theatre (1994-1998);
- Special Arts Program: Artists (painters, actors and musicians) from Lithuania and France ran summer arts schools for children and adults with disability (1995, 1997, 1999);
- Facilitating the development of new disability organizations (*Movement for Integration, Vilnius 1996; Cerebral Palsy Association 1997; and Psychiatric Rehabilitation Bureau 2001, self-help groups 1998-2002*).
- Development of self-help groups for users and ex-users of mental health services. Groups led by specialists and users themselves (1998, 1999);
- Disability Awareness clips promoting the social integration of persons with disability into society (1998);
- Research study carried out into “*Women with Disability and Women Carers of Persons with Disability*” (1998);
- Research study carried out into “*Community Attitudes Towards Persons with Disability*” (1998-1999);

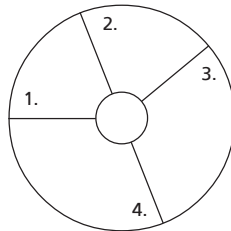
- Disability Prevention Program. Four community service video-clips produced, accompanied by posters and booklets. Topics included:- “*Safety in the Home*”, “*Drink Driving*”, “*No to Alcohol and Smoking During Pregnancy*” and “*Recreational Safety*” (1998-1999).
- Increasing employment opportunities for users and ex-users of mental health services through training in computer skills and work placements (2000);
- Increasing employment opportunities for persons with disability through training programs aimed at increasing their competitiveness in the labour market (2001);
- Establishment of Elektrenai Community Initiatives Center, which promotes self-support, self-help among community members and community initiatives aimed at creating a sense of community spirit and voluntary participation (2000 - 2002);

# Financial report - 2003

The overall budget for the Disability Information and Consultation Bureau for the year 2003 was **166 000 Litai**. In comparison to the year 2002 the income of the DICB increased 22%. However, it must be noted that due to the fluctuation in the exchange rate of the US dollar there was an impact on the implementation of some projects and a financial loss was encountered by the organisation.

## The income of the DICB was received from the following sources:

1. Phare Access Programme 2000	19%	31 000 Lt
2. International Labour Organization	20%	33 000 Lt
3. Democracy Commission, US Embassy Vilnius	30%	50 000 Lt
4. European Union Delegation, Lithuania	31%	52 000 Lt
<b>Total:</b>		<b>166 000 Lt</b>



## Breakdown of expenses of DICB for year 2003:

1. Salaries	33%
2. Project activities	60%
3. Staff development	7%

