

FOREIGN EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL ADAPTATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE CIS COUNTRIES AND THE USA

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Yusupova Sevara

Lecturer, National University of Uzbekistan

Annotation

This study explores the foreign experience of social adaptation of persons with disabilities, with a particular focus on the practices implemented in CIS countries and the United States. It examines how various nations have developed comprehensive approaches that encompass legislative frameworks, inclusive education, employment support, and the creation of accessible environments. Through comparative analysis, the study seeks to identify best practices that can be adapted to improve social adaptation strategies in the CIS region, emphasizing the importance of fostering an inclusive society that values the contributions of all its members. Ultimately, the findings aim to contribute to the development of effective policies and practices that ensure equal rights and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Keywords

social adaptation, persons with disabilities, foreign experience, inclusive education, legislative framework, employment support, accessible environment, social inclusion, disability rights, equal opportunities, social policy, accessibility, rehabilitation, disability support services, best practices, social integration.

In the modern world, the issue of social adaptation of persons with disabilities is an important part of the social policy of many states. Foreign countries pay great attention to creating conditions in which people with disabilities can fully participate in public life. Social adaptation includes ensuring an accessible environment, opportunities for education and employment, as well as medical and psychological support. The experience of developed countries shows that successful integration of persons with disabilities is possible through the joint efforts of the state, society, and social service professionals.

“Social adaptation of persons with disabilities is one of the key directions of modern social policy in most countries. It is a complex and multifaceted process of adapting a person with a disability to the conditions of the surrounding environment, including both the individual efforts of the person and the measures

undertaken by society and the state. The main goal of adaptation is to ensure equal opportunities for participation in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of society" [1].

In Russia, until 1992 and for some time afterward, disability was primarily viewed from a medical perspective. People with disabilities were often seen as "terminally ill," which led to a neglect of the social and economic aspects of their lives, as well as their rights and opportunities.

This narrow approach overlooked the importance of comprehensive rehabilitation, which includes not only medical treatment but also social support, psychological assistance, and education.

However, in recent years, the state has begun to actively create conditions for people with disabilities to lead fulfilling lives. Rehabilitation programs are being developed, accessible infrastructure is being created, and special educational programs are being implemented. An important step has been the development of inclusive education and social support systems, which help people with disabilities better integrate into society and feel valued.

In Moscow, conditions have been created based on the concept of universal design. Opportunities for people with disabilities are gradually improving, which is linked to advancements in science, technology, and medicine. New treatment methods, modern rehabilitation tools, and technical devices help people with disabilities lead more active and independent lives.

In sociology, social adaptation is understood as the process of a person entering society, where they learn accepted norms and rules of behavior. For people with disabilities, it is especially important to create conditions that allow them to fully realize their potential – to start families, monitor their health, work, socialize, and build relationships with others.

Today, the authorities in Moscow are systematically addressing this challenge, aiming to make the city convenient and accessible for all residents. The creation of an inclusive environment is based on two key principles enshrined in international documents: "universal design" and "reasonable accommodation."

The first approach involves the use of universal signs and symbols that help people with visual or hearing impairments navigate spaces easily. The second approach includes modernizing existing buildings and infrastructure to meet the individual needs of people with disabilities. Ensuring free access to public places is a crucial step toward overcoming isolation and providing these individuals with equal rights and opportunities.

Since the 1990s, state policies have been purposefully addressing issues related to disability. Gradually, new legislation has been enacted that guarantees people

with disabilities the right to social and financial support, a decent standard of living, and access to medical, psychological, and rehabilitative care, including the use of prosthetic and orthopedic devices for health restoration. They also have the right to education, vocational training, rehabilitation, assistance, counseling, employment services, and other types of support that enable them to realize their potential and accelerate their social integration.

People with disabilities also have the right to live in their families or in alternative settings and to participate in all forms of community activities related to creativity and leisure. If it is necessary for a person with a disability to stay in a specialized institution, the environment and living conditions should closely resemble those of normal life.

The United Nations General Assembly established December 3rd as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. In Russia, the rights of people with disabilities are enshrined in key legislative acts, including the Declaration of Human Rights and Freedoms[3].

Russian legislation includes a comprehensive set of normative acts aimed at protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Key provisions guarantee the right to education, work, medical assistance, and social protection. The legislation also mandates the creation of an accessible environment, special rehabilitation programs, and state support. All these measures are implemented to ensure that people with disabilities can fully realize their potential and actively participate in societal life.

The most significant international document outlining the principles for protecting the rights of people with disabilities is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2006. The Convention establishes that individuals with disabilities have the same rights and freedoms as all other citizens, and that states are obligated to create conditions for the realization of these rights. It reflects key areas of state policy: ensuring accessible environments, developing inclusive education, promoting employment, and facilitating participation in cultural life [4].

The UN Convention particularly emphasizes respect for the dignity of people with disabilities and their equality. It guarantees them access to education, employment, healthcare, and participation in public processes.

This international instrument, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, was adopted by the UN General Assembly through resolution 61/106 on December 13, 2006. Article 26 mentions that States Parties undertake, with the support of others with disabilities, effective and appropriate measures to empower persons with disabilities to achieve and maintain maximum independence, full

physical, mental, social, and professional abilities, and full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life. To this end, States Parties organize, strengthen, and expand comprehensive habilitation and rehabilitation services and programs, especially in the fields of healthcare, employment, education, and social services, ensuring that these services and programs are accessible:

- a) they were to be initiated as early as possible and based on a multidisciplinary assessment of the needs and strengths of the individual;
- b) they facilitated engagement and inclusion in the local community and all aspects of social life, were voluntary in nature, and were made accessible to people with disabilities as close as possible to their places of residence, including in rural areas. [5].

Social adaptation is closely linked to the provisions of the Convention. The document emphasizes that the main task of the state is to create conditions under which a person with a disability can live independently and participate in society. Therefore, social adaptation is regarded as an important mechanism for realizing human rights.

In addition to the Convention, other international instruments are also significant. Among them are the Rules on equal opportunities for people with disabilities, adopted by the United Nations in 1993, and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with Intellectual Disabilities, established as early as 1971. These documents form the basis for developing government programs and measures for social adaptation in many countries around the world.

In conclusion, it can be noted that an entire normative framework has been formed at the international level. All these documents guarantee equal rights for all people, protect against any form of discrimination, and obligate states to create conditions in which every person can feel comfortable and free. These norms help governments develop social support and integration programs for people with disabilities.

“Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 December 1993).

The term ‘rehabilitation’ means a process aimed at helping persons with disabilities achieve and maintain an optimal level of physical, intellectual, psychological, and/or social functioning and thereby providing them with the means to change their lives and expand the boundaries of their independence. Rehabilitation may include measures to secure and/or restore functioning or to compensate for the loss or absence of functioning or for a functional limitation. The rehabilitation process does not merely involve the provision of medical care. It

encompasses a wide range of actions and activities, from initial and more general rehabilitation to targeted activities, such as the restoration of vocational capacity”.

Here’s a natural English translation preserving meaning and style:

In our view, rehabilitation helps a person regain or develop the necessary skills for living. It may include medical care, psychological support, education, and vocational training. Thanks to rehabilitation, people with disabilities can become more independent and active in society. If you’d like, I can format this for a document or fit it into a blocks document.

Rule 8. Income maintenance and social security

States are responsible for providing social security to persons with disabilities and for maintaining their incomes.

1. States should ensure the maintenance of adequate incomes for persons with disabilities who, by reason of incapacity or for reasons related to incapacity, have temporarily lost the ability to earn a living, whose earnings have decreased, or who are unable to find work. States should ensure that, in providing assistance, account is taken of the costs that persons with disabilities and their families often incur as a result of disability.

2. States should ensure the maintenance of adequate incomes for persons with disabilities who, by reason of incapacity or for reasons related to incapacity, have temporarily lost the ability to earn a living, whose earnings have decreased, or who are unable to find work. States should ensure that, in providing assistance, account is taken of the costs that persons with disabilities and their families often incur as a result of disability.

3. States should also ensure the provision of financial support and social protection to persons who have taken on the responsibility of caring for a person with a disability.

4. Social security systems should include measures to restore the capacity of persons with disabilities to earn income. These systems should also provide for the organization, development and financing of vocational and technical training and for assistance to such training. They should also support employment services.

5. Social security programs should also encourage the efforts of persons with disabilities themselves to seek work that would provide income or restore their incomes.

6. Financial assistance to persons with disabilities should be provided for as long as the disability persists, and in such a way as to encourage them to seek employment. Such assistance should be reduced or discontinued only after persons with disabilities begin to receive an adequate and guaranteed income.

7. States where social security services are largely provided by the private sector should encourage local communities, charities and families to develop their own measures and incentives to ensure employment and related activities[6].

In our view, persons with disabilities often require long-term and regular support. This is because some impairments may persist throughout life. Therefore, assistance should be systematic: medical, social and psychological. Such support helps a person feel stable and confident.

"Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (UN, 1971)." This Declaration pays special attention to social adaptation in society. Wherever possible, a mentally retarded person should live with their family or foster parents and participate in various forms of community life. Families of such persons should receive assistance. If it is necessary to place such a person in a specialized institution, steps should be taken to ensure that the new environment and living conditions differ as little as possible from ordinary life[7].

The British approach to enabling independent living for people with disabilities is built on the ideas of normalization and enhancing the social value of the individual. Although these concepts were criticized by the scholar M. Oliver, who held a different view, the model nevertheless had a major influence on the public policies of Western countries. It promotes the idea that it is important to develop such people's abilities comprehensively, to help them learn to cope with difficulties independently, to support themselves and to grow as individuals.

Independent living here means the right to be a full member of society and to participate in all aspects of social, political and economic life. It also means the ability to make one's own choices freely; to have unimpeded access to transport and buildings; to obtain information; and to work and study[8].

The experience of foreign countries demonstrates that the successful social adaptation of people with disabilities requires a comprehensive approach that includes legislative, educational, economic, and cultural measures. The United States is considered one of the leaders in this area. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted, which became the foundation of the American inclusion model. It prohibits discrimination based on disability in employment, education, public services, and transportation. The law requires employers to provide 'reasonable accommodations' in the workplace – adjustments to schedules, equipment, or responsibilities – so that individuals can effectively perform their jobs[9].

We studied that, in foreign practice, social adaptation is viewed as a process of inclusion of individuals into society. The primary goal is not to isolate people with

disabilities but to create conditions for their equal participation in social, cultural, and economic life.

The adaptation of vulnerable population groups requires a comprehensive approach: creating barrier-free environments, implementing inclusive education, providing support in the labor market, and educating society. Only by removing physical and social barriers can we ensure real equality of opportunities and full participation of every individual in community life.

Currently, one of the serious barriers is considered to be the social-status barrier, which encompasses stigmatization and stereotypes against people with disabilities. Stereotypical perceptions of individuals with disabilities are still widespread in the public consciousness. Unfortunately, many regard them as inferior and ineffective employees, leading to the offering of simple positions with low qualifications, modest pay, and monotonous tasks.

Previously, urban infrastructure, businesses, and transportation did not facilitate the full integration of people with disabilities into society—these individuals often remained virtually completely isolated.

Even in developed countries, individuals with disabilities can face certain challenges. These include architectural barriers, limited employment opportunities, as well as a lack of social support and societal prejudice.

Another important barrier is the medical and psychological barrier. If a person is unable to work, it is essential to provide them with vocational training and retraining to improve their effectiveness in the job market. Furthermore, if significant psychological complexes develop, they can lead to negative consequences; therefore, psychological support for individuals with disabilities is necessary[10].

“Labor adaptation is complicated by numerous factors:

- unaccommodated workplaces;
- biased attitudes of employers and hidden discrimination;
- weak implementation of employment quotas;
- limited opportunities for professional growth and retraining.

As noted by the World Health Organization (WHO), the majority of employable individuals with disabilities face systemic barriers to employment, even when they possess the necessary qualifications”[10].

In our view, the main barriers for people with disabilities are not only physical obstacles but also social stereotypes. Sometimes society is not fully prepared to accept individuals with special needs, complicating their adaptation.

Individuals with disabilities have the right to economic and social security and to a satisfactory standard of living. They have the right, in accordance with their

capabilities, to obtain and retain employment or to engage in useful, productive, and rewarding activities and to be members of trade union organizations.

People with disabilities have the right to live within their families or in conditions that replace it, and to participate in all forms of community activities related to creativity or leisure. As for their place of residence, no individual with a disability should be subjected to any special treatment that is not required due to their health condition or that would lead to an improvement in their health. If the stay of a person with a disability in a special institution is necessary, the environment and living conditions in it should closely resemble the environment and living conditions of individuals of their age group[11].

We believe that the rights of people with disabilities must be securely protected by the state and society. Every individual has the right to a dignified life, education, work, and participation in public life, regardless of their health condition.

The concept of civil rights embodies the ideas of a 'new' disability paradigm and offers a revolutionary approach: for the first time in history, it recognizes people with disabilities as full participants in society and active subjects of social policy. This creates a foundation for their reintegration into everyday life through strategies that overcome isolation.

Such an anti-discrimination model of civil rights began to spread in the West after the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the United States in 1990, along with similar acts in European countries. Experts note a convergence of national approaches to disability policy, as many cities looked to American legislation, particularly this key U.S. law, for guidance.

Social adaptation of people with disabilities is an important task for modern society. The experience of different countries demonstrates that the creation of an accessible environment, the development of legislation, and international cooperation play a key role in addressing this issue. Gradually, society is evolving and coming to the understanding that individuals with disabilities are equal members of the community, and their participation in social life should be supported and promoted.

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