

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Recommendation 1592 (2003)¹ Towards full social inclusion of people with disabilities

1. It has been estimated that people with disabilities represent 10 to 15% of the total population in Europe. In other words, 80 to 120 million European citizens have a form of disability, a number which exceeds the population of almost every European state.

2. Some of the fundamental rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights, its Protocols, and the Revised European Social Charter are still inaccessible to many people with disabilities: the right to education; the right to work; the right to private and family life; the right to protection of health and social security; the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion; the right to adequate housing, etc.

3. The right to receive support and assistance, although essential to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities, is not enough. Guaranteeing access to equal political, social, economic and cultural rights should be a common political objective for the next decade. Equal status, inclusion, full citizenship, and the right to choose should be further promoted and implemented.

4. The granting of rights, although necessary, is not sufficient. People with disabilities, like all people, require love and affection which is most often best provided by their families. Specific measures and assistance are therefore essential to help families overcome the threat of many possible sources of deprivation and provide a caring home as a much better and more natural alternative to life in large-scale institutions.

5. The Parliamentary Assembly notes with satisfaction that in certain member states policies concerning people with disabilities have been gradually evolving over the past decade from an institutional approach, considering people with disabilities as “patients”, to a more holistic approach, viewing them as “citizens” who have a right to individual support and self-determination.

6. The year 2003, declared European Year of People with Disabilities by the Council of the European Union, will be an opportunity to induce a real change in attitudes towards people with disabilities and their rights by raising the awareness of decision makers, professionals and the general public by means of a more active involvement of European organisations, national governments, social partners, the mass media, and various non-governmental and advocacy groups across Europe.

7. The Assembly warmly welcomes the “new vision” set out in the declaration adopted by the participants at the European Congress on Disability in Madrid (March 2002)

in preparation for the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003.

8. The Assembly strongly supports the initiative of the Council of Europe and the Spanish Government to hold the 2nd European Conference of Ministers responsible for Integration Policies for People with Disabilities in Malaga on 7 and 8 May 2003. The conference will aim to set forth the European disability policy agenda for the next decade by identifying key areas of action where progress is yet to be made.

9. A decade ago, following the 1st European Conference of Ministers responsible for Integration Policies for People with Disabilities in 1991, the Assembly adopted its Recommendation 1185 (1992) on rehabilitation policies for the disabled, and the Committee of Ministers adopted its Recommendation No. R (92) 6 on a coherent policy for people with disabilities. The issues raised and recommendations made remain highly relevant, particularly with a view to taking stock of achievements and identifying remaining obstacles to the social inclusion of people with disabilities in Europe.

10. The enlargement of the Council of Europe and the prospect of the enlargement of the European Union to countries in central and eastern Europe create a favourable political context to advance human rights and social policies, including policies for the inclusion of people with disabilities, through exchange of experience and adoption of normative standards of the Council of Europe and the *acquis communautaire* of the European Union.

11. The Assembly recommends that, in the course of the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003, the Committee of Ministers:

- i. invite all member states to participate in the 2nd European Conference of Ministers responsible for Integration Policies for People with Disabilities and to honour the commitments they undertake there;
- ii. invite all member states to report regularly on progress made in the implementation of its Recommendation No. R (92) 6 on a coherent policy for people with disabilities;
- iii. invite those member states which are not yet members, to consider acceding to the Council of Europe Partial Agreement in the Social and Public Health Field and fully participate in the activities of the latter;
- iv. instruct the relevant bodies of the Council of Europe:
 - a. to give consideration to including explicit reference to discrimination on the grounds of disability in the two main Council of Europe legal instruments: the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 14); and the Revised European Social Charter (Part V, Article E);
 - b. to play an active role in the United Nations initiative to draft proposals for a comprehensive international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of people with disabilities;

c. to begin forthwith the preparation of a convention:

- establishing a minimum recruitment quota for people with a disability in companies employing more than fifty staff, with an obligation for firms which are certified as being unable to attain the quota to contribute to a specific fund for the benefit of all people with disabilities;
- reserving the posts which suit the types of training given to people with disabilities, in national and local government offices and services;
- prescribing advantages, particularly in respect of taxation, for enterprises and employers who recruit people with a disability, such advantages at all events offsetting the expenditure for conversion of the premises and/or workplace;

d. to adopt an action programme for the full social inclusion of people with disabilities in Europe, as a follow-up to the 2nd European Conference of Ministers responsible for Integration Policies for People with Disabilities;

e. to make a survey of all the vocational training courses taught in specialised establishments to people with a disability, and to establish close co-ordination between such training and the jobs actually available, in order to afford all possible access for people with disabilities to rewarding occupations that ensure independence and dignity;

f. to introduce a quality seal under the supervision of the competent authorities for goods and services meeting the statutory or regulatory requirements as regards employment of people with a disability;

g. to consider giving non-governmental organisations Observer status within the Committee on the Rehabilitation and Integration of People with Disabilities (CD-P-RR);

h. to establish an inter-departmental group on disability task force to mainstream disability issues in all activities and sectors of its work, and to raise awareness of disability matters throughout the Organisation;

i. to establish an in-house code of good practice to ensure:

- the accessibility of Council of Europe premises;
- the accessibility of all Council of Europe websites to people with disabilities, particularly visual impairments and learning disabilities, by applying the guidelines of the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI);
- the accessibility of Council of Europe printed material in alternative formats (large print, Braille, audio cassettes);
- the inclusion of disability requirements in its procurement policy;
- the employment of a higher percentage of people with disabilities;

v. invite the Council of Europe Development Bank to insist on compliance with accessibility requirements when granting construction loans.

1. *Assembly debate* on 29 January 2003 (5th Sitting) (see Doc. 9632, report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Surján).

Text adopted by the Assembly on 29 January 2003 (5th Sitting).