Helios II: 3rd Community action programme for disabled persons. Evaluation 1993-1996. Report

1998/2028(COS) - 20/01/1998 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: to present the Commission report for 1993-1996 concerning the HELIOS II programme (third Community action plan to assist disabled people). CONTENT: The HELIOS II programme was set up under Decision 93/136/EEC with four key objectives: - to develop and improve exchange and information activities with Member States and NGOs; - to promote effective approaches and measures in order to achieve increased effectiveness and better coordination of actions; - to promote cooperation at Community level between Member States and the associations concerned based on best practices and innovative experience; - to continue cooperation with European NGOs and representative NGOs from the Member States. The budget allocation for HELIOS II was about ECU 40 million. From the Commission?s assessment it emerges that, despite its limitations, the programme has greatly contributed to a number of developments with regard to the disabled. The Commission?s conclusions may be summed up as follows: 1) Added value of HELIOS II: at European level, HELIOS II has undeniably provided added value through the establishment of a common pool of knowledge, policies and innovative practices in this area. The programme has resulted in increased communication between professionals from different countries and encouraged support and solidarity between disability organisations and the disabled at European level. At national level, it has enabled those involved in the sector to compare notes and strengthen solidarity between the participants in the Member States, contributing to the breaking down of isolation of disabled persons, voluntary carers and professionals in the field, increasing the self-awareness of the handicapped within representative organisations and developing a better concept of good practice, particularly related to the active participation of disabled people in projects concerning them. 2) Limitations of the programme: the most obvious limitations of HELIOS II lie within the conception of the programme itself and it capacity to bring about ?real? changes at political level. It is very dependent for results on participants and policies at national level. Similarly, its capacity to achieve the involvement and consultation of the disabled has been more or less neglected or underestimated. A clear dissemination and public-awareness strategy has also been somewhat lacking. Finally, coordination between Member State policies relating to disability has not been fully effective. 3) Implications for future action: in the light of the new Community disability strategy, presented in the Commission Communication of 1996, concerning equal opportunities for the handicapped (COS0477), it would appear that in future measures should be taken to: - promote a target approach concerning the rights of the disabled (to increase their self-awareness as citizens); - strengthen dialogue between Member States by establishing effective communication channels between the public authorities (European and national) and other interest groups; - ensure the full representation of disabled people in Community actions in accordance with the principle of ? mainstreaming? set out in the Commission?s new strategy; - ensure a genuine civic dialogue with NGOs. Finally, the Commission indicates that, following the ratification of the Treaty of Amsterdam, a new legislative proposal will be presented along the lines set out in the new strategy to ensure equal treatment for the disabled, taking account of the results of the HELIOS II programme.