Situation of disabled people in the enlarged European Union: the European action plan 2006-2007

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PURPOSE : Commission Communication on the European Action Plan 2006-2007 on the situation of disabled people in the enlarged EU.

CONTENT : The EU Disability Action Plan (DAP) - established by the European Commission to ensure a coherent policy follow-up to the European Year of Disabled people in the enlarged Europe - provides a dynamic framework to develop the EU disability strategy. This Communication identifies priority objectives and actions for the second phase (2006-2007) of the DAP, focusing on the active inclusion of people with disabilities. Given the current demographic situation, the economic potential of disabled people and the contribution they can make to economic and employment growth must be further activated on the basis of the Social Agenda for 2005-2010. Moreover, in support of the refocused Lisbon strategy, this Communication calls on Member States to promote inclusion of disabled people in their forthcoming Reform Programmes for growth and jobs. This Communication is also the first EU report on the overall situation of disabled people which the Commission has undertaken to publish biennially on the European Day of Disabled People. It will be a tool for disability policy-makers throughout Europe, complementing and adding value to their policies and actions.

Three operational objectives are central to the DAP:

- full implementation of the Employment Equality Directive;

- successful mainstreaming of disability issues in relevant Community policies; and

- improving accessibility for all.

The DAP covers the period 2004-2010 in successive phases, each highlighting a number of inter-linked priorities. Phase 1 runs from 2004 to 2005, phase 2 from 2006 to 2007.

Priority areas for the second phase (2006-2007): Phase two of the DAP will focus on active inclusion of people with disabilities, building on the citizens' concept of disability as reflected in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and on the values inherent in the forthcoming UN Convention on the protection and promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. It is implicit in the citizens' concept that disabled people have the same individual choices and control in their everyday life as non-disabled people. This emphasises the need for an environment that enables disabled people to be more independent.

Under the following four priorities, actions will promote **the independent living of people with disabilities**:

- encouraging activity: strategies for the adaptation and reintegration into working life of people who become disabled during their working life will be encouraged. Rehabilitation services, individualised personal assistance and making work pay will be promoted.
- Promoting access to quality support and care services
- Fostering accessibility of goods and services: work on services, transport and increased accessibility of ICT, including access to the new generation of assistive systems, will add to current actions on

accessibility of public buildings. Accessible transport systems will be promoted in and between urban areas.

- Increasing the EU's analytical capacity: studies analysing data obtained from previous Eurostat surveys and the Labour Force Survey as well as data from Member States' administrative registers will be launched. The Sixth Framework Programme for Research, technological development and demonstration activities (2002-2006, FP6), and the forthcoming Seventh Research Framework Programme (2007-2013) will continue to fund research in the area of disability.

Disability actions are chiefly the responsibility of Member States and are most effectively dealt with at national level. Increased mainstreaming of disability under the EU Action Plan, with operational support from the European Social Fund, contributes to equal opportunities in the enlarged Europe. The Commission will monitor implementation of the proposed actions through a continuous dialogue with all the stakeholders concerned. Midterm evaluation of the Action Plan will take place in 2008 as planned.