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

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Liz Lynne (ALDE, UK) in response to the Commission communication on the situation of disabled people in the enlarged EU (European Action Plan 2006-2007), which is the second phase of the EU Disability Action Plan.

The report stressed that access to public transport and information technologies are vital for disabled people, and also called for better integration of disabled people into mainstream education and the job market, as well as a European charter on quality of support for disabled people.

Among other proposals, MEPs pointed out that for air travel, disabled people and those with reduced mobility already have rights under EU law. They wanted the Commission to extend similar rights to disabled people for all modes of transport. The report welcomed moves by the Commission to improve access to information and communication technologies, but noted that 80% of public websites, including those of the EU institutions, are generally not accessible to people with disabilities. It also stressed that all EU documentation should be available on demand in accessible formats.

The committee said that the Commission should work with Member States to integrate disabled people from an early age into mainstream education wherever possible, and should study the idea of establishing a right to mainstream education for disabled children and their families if they wish it. Information campaigns are needed to raise awareness amongst employers of their responsibilities and to overcome any prejudices they may have about employing a disabled person. The report welcomed efforts to move away from the institutionalisation of disabled people, but it emphasised that this requires a sufficient level of community-based back-up services. To this end, the Commission was asked to press for a European charter on quality of support for disabled people.