

# Situation of disabled women in the European Union

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Esther HERRANZ GARCIA (EPP-ED, ES) on the situation of women with disabilities in the European Union.

The committee urged both the Commission and the Member States to ensure the removal of existing barriers and obstacles, including architectural barriers, with a view to creating equal rights and opportunities for women and girls with disabilities to play a part in family, political, cultural, social and professional life.

MEPs wanted Member States to take full account of the needs of persons with disabilities and the special needs of women in all national, regional and local policies, particularly those covering education, town planning, employment, housing, transport, health and social service.

The committee expressed shock at the fact that women with disabilities are three times as likely to be the victims of violence as women without disabilities, and called for the Daphne programme to be used to combat this type of violence. It asked the Member States and the Commission to put in place effective legislation and policies ensuring that "instances of exploitation, violence and sexual abuse against persons with disabilities - within their places of residence and elsewhere - are identified and investigated and, where appropriate, lead to prosecution".

Among their other recommendations, MEPs urged the Commission and the Member States to promote pilot schemes and tried and tested procedures for integrative establishments from kindergarten, school and training to professional life in order to actively combat segregation of disabled people from childhood onwards. The committee also called on the Member States to address the lack of adequate health care for disabled women by providing specialist medical staff and appropriate infrastructures.

The committee expressed concern at the fact that disabled women have lower levels of educational achievement, which makes it more difficult for them to obtain and keep jobs. It said that people with disabilities must be given the same opportunities to study and have right of access to the labour market so that they can support themselves. To help achieve this, the committee wanted to see all possible measures, including tax breaks, to encourage employers to take on disabled persons and tailor working hours to the needs of parents bringing up children with disabilities. The Member States and the Commission were also urged to prevent discrimination by employers in connection with the appointment of women with disabilities. And the report urged the Commission and the Member States to devise the necessary measures to assist the work of families and NGOs supporting both people with disabilities and their family.

Lastly MEPs stressed the need to raise the profile and the image of women with disabilities in the media to make the general public more aware of their daily lives and give them greater opportunities to express themselves and take part in social and political life.