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

2006/2105(INI) - 30/11/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on 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. (Please see the summary of 05/10/2006.) It began by stressing that non-discrimination in access to goods and services must be guaranteed for every EU citizen and called on the Commission to propose a directive specifically targeting people with disabilities on the basis of Article 13 of the EC Treaty. Parliament looked at the situation of disabled people in relation to transport, employment, access to information, access to buildings, education and care and the role of social services. It emphasised that there were many forms of disability, including people with mobility problems, visual impairments, hearing impairments, mental health problems, chronic illnesses and learning disabilities. People with multiple disabilities have exceptional problems, and greater attention should be paid to elderly people with disabilities and women with disabilities.

Parliament made the following principal points:

- Directive 2001/85/EC should be strengthened in order to bring it into line with Regulation 1107/2006 /EC concerning the rights of disabled persons when travelling by air. The Commission was encouraged to extend the same legislative rights to persons with disabilities in relation to all modes of transport over time;

- over 80% of public websites, including those of the European institutions, are generally not accessible to people with disabilities, and those institutions were encouraged to rectify this;

- there was a need to launch information campaigns to ensure that employers view the engagement of people with disabilities without any kind of prejudice, in particular, as regards misconceptions concerning the financial costs of employment and candidates' capabilities; people with disabilities under Directive 2000/78/EC and ways of protecting these rights and urges the trade unions to do all in their power to inform members of their rights under the Directive;

- Member States should take due account of the problems faced by parents of children with disabilities, who are often forced to remain outside the labour market, and to promote policies to support such parents; they should also use economic and social instruments to increase the scope for providing care to people with disabilities as part of intergenerational solidarity;

- the Commission must work with Member States to encourage the integration of people with disabilities, from an early age, in mainstream education, whilst still acknowledging in some cases that special schools are necessary;

- Parliament stressed the important role of sport as a factor for improving the quality of life, self-esteem, independence and social integration of people with disabilities;

- the different types of disability required personalised care that takes due account of the disabilities of growing children and those of adults;

- initiatives must be encouraged that develop greater interaction between the public and the mentally disabled, and to de-stigmatise people with mental health problems. Parliament appealed for the necessary support for the families of people with a profound disability;

and sign-language in analogue television programmes;

- vigorous measures must be taken against all forms of violence against people with disabilities, in particular women, elderly people and children, who are frequently victims of mental and physical as well as sexual violence;

- Parliament welcomed moving away from the institutionalisation of people with disabilities, but noted that deinstitutionalisation required a sufficient level of community-based services of high quality, favouring independent living, the right to assistance, and full participation in society within Member States;

- the Commission was asked to press for a European charter on quality of support for people with disabilities with a view to ensuring a high level of integration and participation, whatever the method of support – home, institution or a combination of methods;

- Parliament expressed concern that the Commission had not sufficiently considered the human rights of people with disabilities in assessing compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria within the process of EU enlargement;

- it called for a common European definition of disability;

- the Commission needs to define more clearly in its text the projects that had already been started under the Disability Action Plan; it should also pay more attention to the gender perspective and specific information on women with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities in the new phases of the Disability Action Plan.