

HELIOSCOPE

QUARTERLY - WINTER 1994 - N° 2

Jobs

the challenge
of the 1990s

European Day
of Disabled
Persons 1994

Feature:
the new Community
initiatives
**EMPLOYMENT
and ADAPT**



e d i t o r i a l

Bernhard Wehrens
European Commission
Head of Division
"Integration of disabled people"

employment

Unemployment is perhaps the greatest single problem facing the European Union and its citizens today. For disabled people this problem is even greater than for others. They are at least two to three times more likely to be unemployed than people without disabilities. Action to enable them to improve their situation in this area is therefore an essential part of achieving both economic and social integration.

There is clearly no miracle cure to the current scourge of unemployment. However, the future strategy within the Union for improving the employment opportunities of all its citizens will derive from two very significant documents prepared by the European Commission – the White Paper on “Growth, Competitiveness and Employment” which was published in 1993, and one issued this year on “European Social Policy – a way forward for the Union”.

The first of these White Papers suggested that successfully combatting unemployment depends on developing a healthy and open economy. A significant element in this will be investment in education and training, with each Member State aiming towards universally accessible advanced vocational training, and a genuine right to initial or on-going training throughout people’s lives. The need for training in new technology-related skills is particularly evident.

The second White Paper was produced following extensive consultation, the response to which included many contributions from organisations representing disabled people. It is constructed around four main themes: a new mix between economic and social policies; jobs as the top priority; developing and consolidating the legislative base; and strengthening cooperation and action. This White Paper also includes important references to the need to incorporate equal opportunities for disabled people into EU actions, and to involve disabled people and their representatives in the development of policy and programmes.

The need for the involvement of all interested parties can also be extended to include others such as employers and trade unions. Legislation and other provisions vary noticeably between Member States. But, if disabled people are to gain access to jobs which really match their attributes, and are then to be given the opportunity to develop to their full potential, it is essential that employers and trade union representatives should be willing participants in that process.

There are an increasing number of examples of good practices on the part of members of both these groups, as well as of disabled people working in jobs which are rewarding in all senses of the word. However there is much more to be done.

Letter from the editor

Following on from the presentation of the European Disability Forum in HELIOSCOPE No. 1, the second issue takes employment as its theme. In particular, the feature section contains a description of the new Community initiatives EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT. Later issues of the magazine will focus on school and higher education, social integration and independent living, functional rehabilitation, and new technology. Then as now, we will be looking beyond HELIOS II to other Community programmes in fields related to HELIOS's various sectors of activity, which, whilst not always explicitly targeting disabled people, are nonetheless of concern to them.

We also need to consider how best to build on developments in Member States towards the full integration of disabled people into the employment market. This trend is perhaps best exemplified by the growth in supported employment, and in the introduction of methods to ensure that people in sheltered workshops are able to develop to their full potential, and, if appropriate, then to move into open employment. The potential for developments relating to new technology to provide both benefits and disadvantages for disabled people also needs to be taken into account. In bringing together views on legislation and information about practical measures being taken by many of the principal actors concerned, this issue of HELIOSCOPE should add further stimulus to the movement towards improving employment opportunities for disabled people.

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EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT

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Training and employment for disabled people

Current trends - future perspectives

High and rising unemployment, and the resulting waste of human resources, present one of the major challenges facing the European Union. And disabled people are particularly affected by this development. When investigating policies to combat unemployment, both national governments and European institutions need to consider the strengths, abilities and aspirations of disabled people - and develop innovative responses.



Training, placement, recruitment

Disabled people are entitled to adequate training and assistance when seeking work. It is now generally accepted that their integration will be far more successful if they are given the opportunity to participate in mainstream programmes. But even within these programmes, additional measures may be necessary: adequate consultation must be carried out to ensure that the training sets realistic targets and that the disabled trainee's skills and aspirations match the requirements of the local labour market. This will also help reduce the problem of underemployment, where disabled people are placed in jobs which are not commensurate with their abilities or skills. In addition, encouraging contacts between trainees and potential employers, possibly through brief work placements, can help facilitate the exchange of information and assist both sides in making employment-related decisions.

Integrated training can be provided through on-the-job training as well as by traditional vocational training centres. The former is already becoming more common for people with a learning disability, and has the advantage of establishing valuable contacts for both the disabled person and the employer at an early stage. Integrated schooling which leads to qualifications giving access to training and higher education seems to provide the best form of preparation, and further study will be seen as a natural step.

The needs of those disabled people who presently find it difficult to train in an integrated setting should also be considered, and alternative training techniques developed. A promising example of such an approach is teleworking, whereby people with severe limitations on their mobility or those with learning difficulties are enabled to train and work from home using a computer.

Whether a disabled person is trained in an integrated or segregated setting, the result of a successful training course should be a recognised qualification. This is vital in an increasingly competitive labour market.

With regard to recruitment practices, employers can make a valuable contribution to promoting employment of disabled people by adopting an equal opportunities employment policy, including disability awareness training for job interviewers and other staff. Many Member States provide guidance and assistance for employers who wish to adopt an equal opportunities policy.

Where an employer is concerned about the nature, cost and suitability of any possible accommodation, early consultation with the disabled individual and, where relevant, employment agencies can help in identifying appropriate and cost-effective solutions.

The White Paper

The White Paper

on "European Social Policy, a way forward for the Union" was adopted by the Commission on 27 July 1994 and sets out the Commission's approach to social policy for the period 1995 - 1999. The Commission's view is that there is a need to build the fundamental rights to equal opportunities into Union policies, and a commitment is made to:

- "build on the positive experiences of the European Disability Forum to ensure (...) that the needs of disabled people are taken into account in relevant legislation, programmes and initiatives (...);

- "prepare an appropriate instrument endorsing the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for persons with Disabilities;
- "as part of a process to encourage model employers, prepare a code of good practice in relation to its own personnel policies and practices, and encourage discussions within the framework of the social dialogue on how such a model could be extended more widely."

Also, the Commission will examine how Union action could contribute to the key issue of improved access to means of transport and public buildings, and press

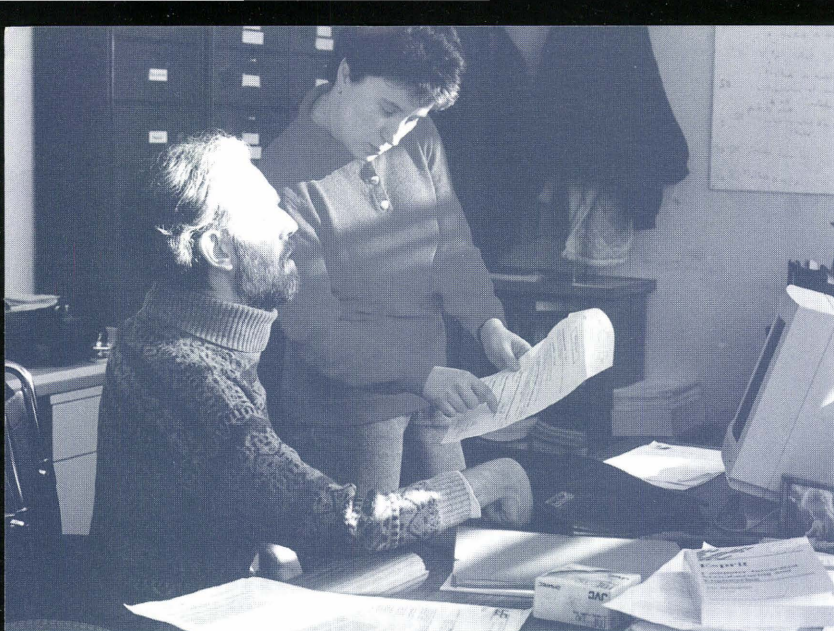
for the adoption of the proposed directive on transport for workers with reduced mobility. Finally, it is suggested that, when the treaties on European Union are next reviewed, serious consideration must be given to a specific reference to combatting discrimination on various grounds including disability.

The White Paper on "European Social Policy, a way forward for the Union" costs 7 ecus.

Further information

on the White Paper and how to obtain it is available from

DG V/ E.5, Information and Publications,
rue de la Loi, 200
B-1049 Brussels,
Belgium.
Fax + 32.2. 296 94 29



The Community needs to pay more attention to the human rights dimension of disability. Disabled people are increasingly arguing that they are being denied their fundamental human and civil rights by an institutionalised process of discrimination which can be seen, for example, in an inaccessible physical environment, segregated schooling and living arrangements, and the denial of employment opportunities.

Encouraging employment of disabled people in the open labour market: Legal obligations

Quota systems – whereby a set percentage of jobs are reserved to disabled workers – are being regarded as the traditional means of guaranteeing employment for disabled people. Today ten of the twelve EU Member States operate some form of quota system. They vary in terms of the employers targeted (public and/or private sector; small or medium-sized enterprises and larger companies); percentage of jobs reserved for disabled people; and penalties for the breach of obligations (for example, Germany and France impose a levy on defaulting employers which is used to provide employment assistance for disabled people). Some quota systems were designed in the post Second World War period, and have seen little change since. Other countries, such as France, have recently attempted to make their systems more relevant to the present economic climate by, for example, providing extra incentives to train disabled people in the workplace.

There is little evidence providing conclusive proof of the success or failure of the quota systems, and opinions differ both within national governments and the disabled community as to whether they should be abolished, more effectively enforced, or improved. However it is certain that quota systems alone cannot provide the solution to the present high levels of unemployment experienced by disabled people.

One measure which has attracted particular attention in the last few years is disability anti-discrimination legislation. With regard to employment this has the advantage of recognising that physical and attitudinal barriers often prevent disabled people from obtaining employment or pro-

motion, and obliging employers to make accommodations by, for example, adapting a building to give a wheelchair user access, or provide extra training for a person with learning disability to acquire the necessary skills.

The German constitution has recently been amended to specifically guarantee equal treatment for disabled people, although this does not amount to comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, whilst consultation on this subject is occurring in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Governments of other countries, such as the Netherlands, have considered the matter, but have yet to adopt legislation.

Sheltered employment

The distribution of sheltered workshops, which provide the traditional form of sheltered employment, is not spread evenly throughout the Union. 80 percent of the approximately 365,000 sheltered workshop places are to be found in just three Member States – the Netherlands, Germany and France. This reflects the different emphasis and directions with regard to sheltered employment in the Community. For example, the French government is currently increasing the number of places available in sheltered workshops, whilst the British government is consulting on the possibility of allowing profit-distributing companies to provide sheltered employment for the first time.

Preparation for open employment is one objective shared by all workshops, regardless of the Member State they are based in. This is proving particularly difficult in the present period of high unemployment and, year after year, only two percent of sheltered workshop employees actually manage to make this transfer. This has led to reassessment of the means by which sheltered employment prepares disabled people for this transfer, and consideration of possible alternatives providing disabled people with greater opportunities. For example, supported employment may provide disabled people with assistance enabling them to work in the open labour market – either through individual placement with back-up support, or through groups of disabled people doing contract work. Initiatives based on some form of supported employment have been introduced in several Member States – including the United Kingdom, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Ireland, the Netherlands and Germany.

Another alternative is the creation of new companies and cooperatives specifically designed to employ disabled people. In Italy, this has proved particularly successful: new cooperatives have fre-

Current trends - future perspectives

quently provided employment for people with mental health problems, with deinstitutionalisation providing the initial impulse to act. Cooperatives have also been established in Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands in lesser numbers. This form of employment has the added bonus of allowing disabled people and their families to be involved in the planning and running of the enterprise to a far larger extent. However, attention should not be focused only on helping people to move out of sheltered employment since, in the immediate future at least, they will continue to be employed in such centres. It is therefore vital to consider the quality of training, employment, remuneration etc. provided to them. They need to be offered a variety of training and employment opportunities including, for example, access to computer technology, which can be of use to both physically and mentally disabled people. In addition, attention must be paid to their legal status and protection to ensure that they are not exploited in any way.

The scope for further Community action

The Community can contribute significantly to the development of improved employment opportunities for disabled people in a number of ways. At the most basic level, it can continue to support research and information and exchange activities as it is presently doing through HELIOS, HORIZON and other Community programmes and initiatives. However, the Community also has the potential to formulate global policy instruments which will have a significant impact on employment opportunities for disabled people. With regard to anti-discrimination legislation, the Community could take the lead by adopting a binding directive obliging the Member States to act. By doing so it would contribute to the achievement of the internal market and to promoting the free movement of workers - both objectives contained in its founding Treaty. Legal and more particularly political problems mean that the adoption of such a directive in the immediate future is unlikely. Nevertheless, there is some hope in the form of the recently published White Paper on Social Policy, which sets out the agenda for Community social policy until the year 1999. The Commission calls for serious consideration to be given to amending the Treaties to include a specific reference to combatting discrimination on various grounds - including disability. The Commission notes that the omission of such a provision in the present Treaty is becoming increasingly difficult to justify in today's Europe. Given the need to de-

velop a "social" as well as an "economic" Europe this is clearly true, and it is to be hoped that the Member States will heed this call in 1996 and that the Community will finally introduce binding legislation to combat disability discrimination.

The White Paper also calls for disabled people to be involved in the planning and formulating of general policy programmes. As an example of current practice: LEONARDO, an action programme designed for the implementation of a Community vocational training policy. In spite of the need to consider the requirements of disabled people referred to above, the draft decision establishing LEONARDO makes little reference to the special needs of disabled people, and there is no evidence that representatives of disabled people were consulted widely before the proposal was drawn up.

The Community also needs to pay more attention to the human rights dimension of disability. Disabled people are increasingly arguing that they are being denied their fundamental human and civil rights by an institutionalised process of discrimination which can be seen, for example, in an inaccessible physical environment, segregated schooling and living arrangements, and the denial of employment opportunities.

In spite of this, the Community as a whole does not regard the problem from a human rights perspective. The European Parliament has however adopted a resolution which refers to the civil and human rights of people with a learning disability - it is now time for the Commission and the Council to follow suit and address this issue.

By Dr. Lisa Waddington,

lecturer in European Community Law at the University of Limburg, Maastricht, the Netherlands, and author of "Disability, Employment and the European Community" (forthcoming)



Grass-roots partnerships

CEEH - Confédération européenne pour l'emploi des handicapés

For too long, the "brave suffering cripple" image of disabled people, much beloved by the media, has been a hard one to break. And too many organisations, with the greatest of good will, have conspired with that image under the guise of helping. Disabled people do not want to be patronised and set apart. They do want their views heard, and be part of life's mainstream, says Robbie Lloyd, Press & PR Manager for OUTSET, the UK organisation promoting employment and training for disabled people.

CEEH? Just another acronym? Yet another group of disability organisations getting together across Europe and dictating to the rest of us?

Well, no; CEEH - the Confédération européenne pour l'emploi des handicapés is exactly what it claims to be. A federation of non-governmental organisations that is taking its soundings from grass-roots level. This means that those of us who have a disability will not only be able to have our say, but will be instrumental in improving our opportunities.

CEEH's aim is quite simple: promoting the rights of disabled people to full participation in training and employment opportunities across the European Union, and ensuring that they share equally in the rise in living and working conditions - the main aim of the European Union.

It is being developed with the active participation of non-governmental organisations at both national and European levels. CEEH is the umbrella organisation working across the European Union, and it is the heart of decision-making, as it consults directly with the Commission on issues related to employment and training. Each country within the Union has its own national federation of NGOs of and for disabled people.

The UK federation is called EDEN and has the following aims:

- To be the centre of policy making and decision taking on training and employment for disabled people in Europe.
- To assist NGOs to know where the funding is.
- Advising on where to lobby and who to talk to.
- To "de-mystify" Europe for small organisations.

EDEN includes representatives of all disability groups, and was launched in London in October. Similar developments include: HORIZON 2000 and Fetoc (Belgium), Formem (Portugal), Fagerh (France) and Cneasta (Ireland).

Any NGO, be it the large scale charity, or a small voluntary organisation, is positively encouraged to join EDEN, with its immediate access to the expertise of CEEH. The benefits are obvious: a sharing of know-how and experience, and the opportunity to influence European legislation. The right to take their place in the job market is probably one of the most important of all for disabled people. CEEH and its national federations throughout Europe help us in those aspirations - and give us all a very real say in our future.

Further information

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EDEN

Maurice Press
Disability Resource Team
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UK - London NW1 1JR

Access to meaningful paid work for users and/or ex-users of mental health services



Access to meaningful paid work is a basic human right. Users and/or ex-users of mental health services are the most vulnerable group in getting access to employment. There are all kinds of hidden fears and prejudices to be overcome, far more than with other hidden or visible disabilities. Since little or no priority is being given to meeting their needs, the most seriously disadvantaged persons (those with long-term mental illness) will suffer doubly in periods of economic restraints and recession. The ERC-WFMH aims:

- to stimulate national bodies to develop activities and programmes offering more flexible opportunities for persons in vocational training, rehabilitation, supported employment and work on the open labour market;

- to develop principles and standards of good practice in the field of employment of persons who (have) experience(d) severe emotional problems or are (have been) labelled as "mentally ill". Valuing the individual and giving him confidence and respect are key elements for the employment of persons with a mental illness.

For further information

European Regional Council - World Federation of Mental Health (ERC - WFMH), Rue Franklin 110, B - 1040 Brussels, Belgium. Tel + 32.2. 735 54 01

On 17 - 18 November 1994,

the Irish national federation of CEEH, CNEASTA, held a European conference on effective partnerships between organisations of and for disabled people, employers as well as trade unions, and service providers. The aim of the conference was to explore the potential of social partnerships in promoting employment of disabled people within the EU Member States. Information on the results of the conference is available from: Cneasta, CW, New Ross Ltd., Marsh Meadow, New Ross, Co. Wexford, Ireland.

On 26 and 27 October 1994,

AEH - NGO member of the European Disability Forum responsible for the coordination of the sector relating to "Vocational Training and Employment" - held a European Symposium on "Disabled People and Labour Law".

Information on the results of the conference is available from:

AEH - Action européenne des Handicapés, Wurzerstraße 2-4, D - 53175 Bonn, Germany. Tel: + 49.228. 82 09 30.

Valuing abilities

the Employer's Forum on Disability (UK)

Over the years, the employer's perspective has been conspicuously absent from received thinking on the employment of disabled people. The growth in membership of the Employer's Forum on Disability is evidence of the significant benefits which flow when employers come together to share learning and develop joint initiatives.

117 major private and public UK employers now belong to the Forum, all working towards the long-term goal of bringing more disabled people into employment. Current members include ARCO Chemical Europe, Barclays Bank, British Gas, British Railway, BT, Kingfisher, London Weekend Television, Manpower, McDonald's Restaurants Ltd, Midland Bank, Rank Xerox and the Wellcome Foundation Ltd. They see clearly what is to be gained from membership of an organisation funded and managed by employers.

The Forum is unique in tackling this challenge from the employer's perspective. We make it easier for our members to recruit, retain and develop disabled employees. Members work together to find better and more cost-effective ways

to bring disabled people into jobs. A good example is our work regarding disabled graduates. The education system makes no provision for accessible Careers Fairs, so in 1992 18 of our members jointly funded 6 accessible Fairs, thus giving disabled students the same opportunities as their peers to research careers and meet employers. Over the next two years we shall be making 10 Fairs accessible.

Another successful joint venture is the unique Coverdale Leadership Development Programme for Disabled People, which offers bursaries to disabled people for high quality management training courses. The Midland Bank, the Post Office and other participating companies work with the Coverdale Organisation to provide a wide variety of management and personal development courses.



Valuing abilities

Autumn 1994 has seen the launch of the first Employer / NGO partnership to develop supported employment for people with autism. Eight Forum members will offer job vacancies for 50 skilled unemployed autistic people. Working alongside the employers, the Autistic Society will undertake job matching, and provide job coaches.

Following the example of the Forum, Local Employer networks have been pioneered in Birmingham. 40 leading local employers are now sharing information and the best employment practice, linking with disabled people and local service providers and offering training in job-search skills to unemployed disabled people. Birmingham's example is now being copied around the country.

In the eight years since it was founded, the Forum has proved beyond doubt the value of this fresh employer-led approach to disability. It's a very special "self-help club", networking with practical benefit to employers and disabled people.

For further information

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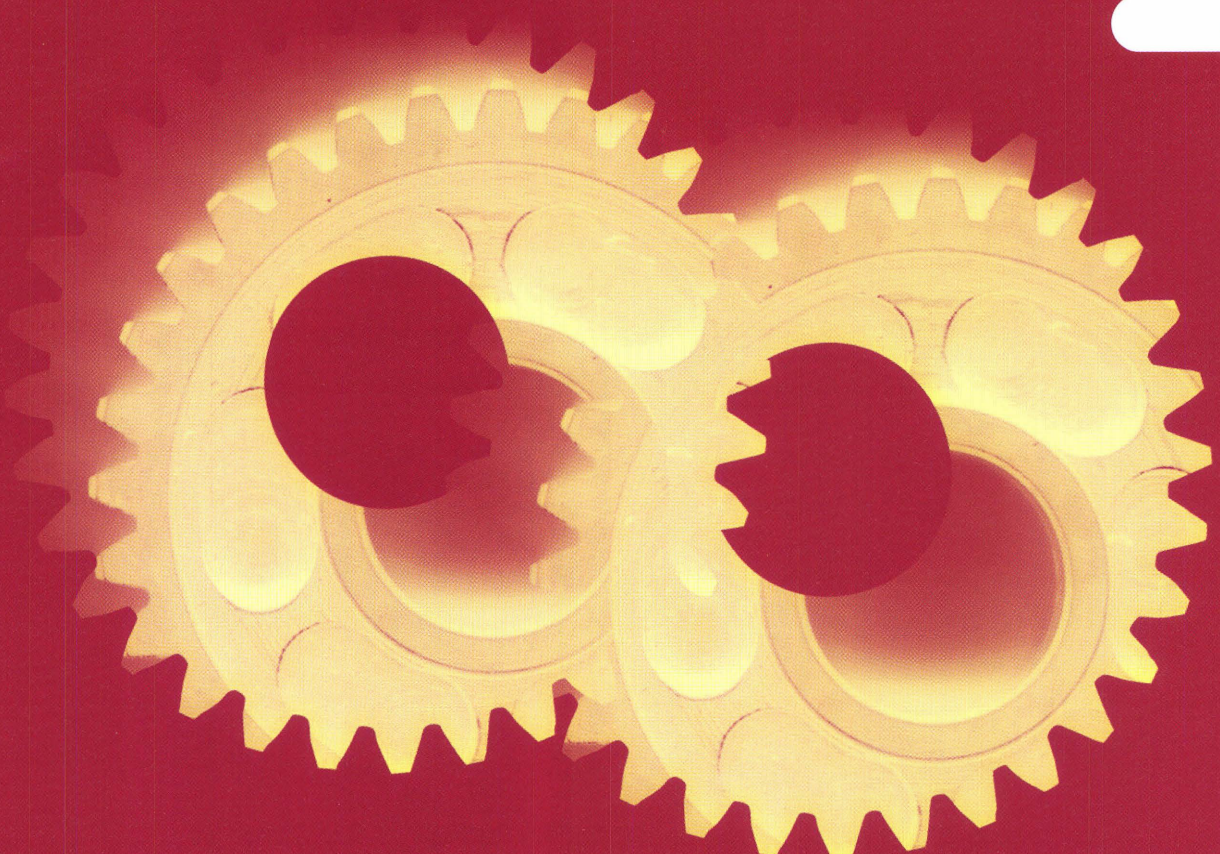
Rosemary Lett,
Birmingham Local
Employers' Network,
Tel: +44.21 451 22 27

The Coverdale Organisation,
Tel: +44.71 925 00 99

Community programmes and initiatives giving employment priority

There is not as yet such a thing as a coherent European social policy. For all practical purposes, apart from a few action programmes, the frequently invoked "social dimension" is to be found only in the support programmes of the European Social Fund (ESF), which is in fact not a social but an employment policy instrument. The way things stand, therefore, the application strategy as regards ESF financing of facilities and projects for disabled people must be to emphasise the training and employment-related aspects.

Much is said about the need for European social policy to move beyond purely employment-related considerations towards the economic and social integration of all EU citizens. It is the view among non-governmental organisations in particular that this should form part of the revised Treaty on European Union. If the Community is to have a clear mandate to take action to assist disabled people, over and above its work on pilot projects, conferences and studies, attention should be focused on the "Maastricht 2" inter-governmental conference in 1996. As Commissioner Pádraig Flynn has repeatedly stressed, new programmes will be needed to promote integration, and not just on the labour market. We are not yet at that stage; in fact the future of a number of the Community's action programmes is currently on the line. The German government, for example, has opposed the successor to the Poverty programme on the grounds of efficiency, subsidiarity and economy. Underlying this may also be annoyance with the networks that have formed, which, together with their pilot projects and other activities, are regarded as competing with national structures. So it would seem that the mood in the Member States is unfavourable to further social policy initiatives from Brussels.



EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT

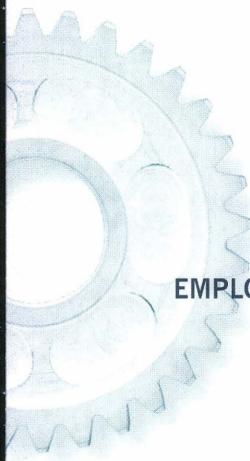
the new
Community
initiatives

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE GENERAL
FOR EMPLOYMENT,
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS



Social
Europe
DG V

employment



EMPLOYMENT and **ADAPT** are direct follow-ups to the European Commission's White Paper on "Growth, competitiveness, employment: The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century", and a major vector of action by the European Social Fund (ESF).

Both initiative programmes support transnational pilot actions, with priority for **Objective 1 regions***, and build on the following fundamental approaches:

- ▶ innovation as regards training, job placement and employment, methodologies, teaching tools and organisation;
- ▶ transnational links;
- ▶ multiplier effects;
- ▶ intervention at grass-roots level;
- ▶ complementarity, e.g. with other Community programmes, to ensure the best possible coordination, optimisation of available expertise and means, and strengthening of Community action.

The Community initiative **EMPLOYMENT (1994 - 1999)**

constitutes an integrated approach based on three interdependent strands:

NOW

(equal opportunities for women in the field of employment);

HORIZON

(integration into the labour market of disadvantaged and disabled persons);

YOUTHSTART

(integration into the labour market of young people without job qualifications).

PURPOSE To use the development of human resources, improvement of working patterns and implementation of transnational measures to support a revival of employment, greater social solidarity throughout the Community and equal opportunities for women on the labour market.

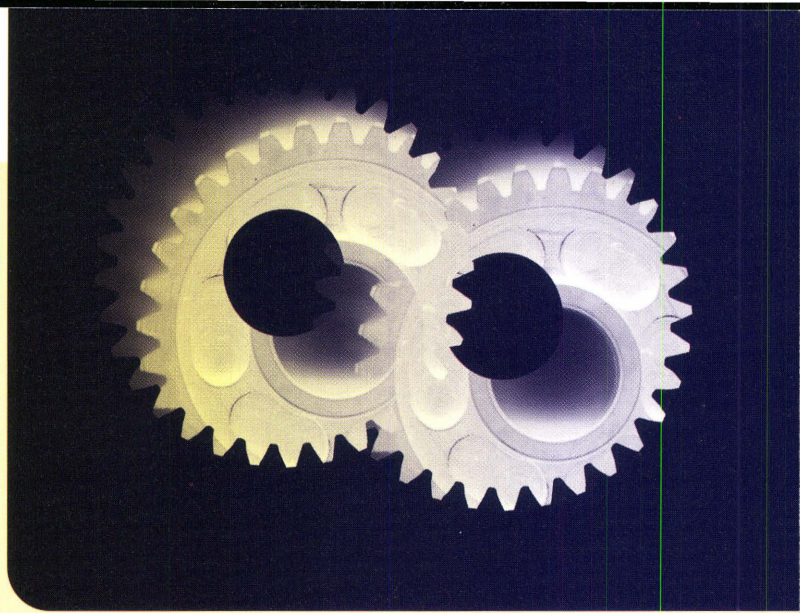
MEASURES Better organisation of training, guidance and placement systems; aid for training in counselling; support for the creation of jobs and the establishment of firms; information and communication for all concerned and the general public.

EMPLOYMENT-NOW (ECU 370 million)

PURPOSE To improve equal opportunities for women with regard to employment, mainly through measures concerning training and access to high-tech and management jobs.

Examples of eligible measures

- ▶ Development of cooperation and of training and employment networks; establishment of guidance and pre-training services and of local services to assist with the establishment of SMEs and cooperatives;
- ▶ Strengthening of links between vocational training bodies and businesses;
- ▶ In the Objective 1 Regions*: links between training, higher education and firms.
- ▶ Personalised and flexible training, initial and continuing training (*particularly in SMEs and exposed sectors*); training in business management; training of trainers, personnel officers and staff in placement services; in the Objective 1 regions*: equal opportunities training for teachers.
- ▶ Cooperation and networking among local employment initiatives for women; creation of self-employed activities, SMEs and cooperatives, and financial instruments to support them.



EMPLOYMENT-HORIZON (ECU 730 million)

PURPOSE To facilitate access to the employment market for disabled and disadvantaged people and at-risk groups such as drug addicts, those on the fringes of society, isolated and homeless people, immigrants, refugees, travellers, convicts and former convicts and the long-term unemployed.

Examples of eligible measures

- ▶ Adaptation of workplaces, particularly through new technologies; introduction of flexible training systems, particularly distance learning and computer-assisted interactive learning;
- ▶ In the Objective 1, 2 and 5(b) areas*: aid to job creation for disabled and disadvantaged people through the establishment of local development agencies;
- ▶ In the Objective 1 regions*: adaptation of buildings and transport to facilitate access to training or work.
- ▶ Training for disabled and disadvantaged people, particularly in new technologies and skills, and methods of training and assessment responding to the various situations and handicaps, for example on-the-job training modules; promotion of Europe-wide recognition of skills already acquired; training of those responsible for human resources and the organisation of work.
- ▶ Development of new types of employment at local level through innovative methods of organisation and planning, particularly within firms and through cooperatives or sheltered employment (by facilitating moving on from such employment); local employment initiatives, particularly in partnership and involving the local community.

EMPLOYMENT-YOUTHSTART (ECU 300 million)

PURPOSE To encourage the integration into the labour market of young people under 20, and in particular those without adequate training or qualifications.

Examples of eligible measures

- ▶ Measures in the public and, where appropriate, private sectors to complement other ESF measures and the LEONARDO programme and including the definition of objectives and standards for guidance, training and apprenticeship, placement or assessment; innovative measures for the integration of young people and transfer of models of good practice; links between education, vocational training and the labour market.
- ▶ Measures based primarily on experience of pilot projects or Community programmes such as LEONARDO and including programmes for the training and placement of young people which stress a spirit of initiative and are coordinated with local schemes; acquisition of special experience in certain areas (arts, heritage, environment, urban renewal, assistance to individuals).
- ▶ Assistance for job creation, particularly as part of mutual assistance networks, commercial transnational bodies and relations with young business people in other Member States; transnational exchanges between local development agencies and local employment initiatives to integrate young people.

ADAPT (1994 - 1999)

(ECU 1.4 billion)

PURPOSE To facilitate the adaptation of workers of both sexes to industrial changes and to changes in production systems; to improve the competitiveness of firms through training; to prevent unemployment by improving qualifications; to create new jobs and fresh activity.

Target groups

- ▶ Private-sector employees at risk of unemployment;
- ▶ Workers who have recently lost their job as a result of restructuring within a company and/or sector;
- ▶ Workers temporarily unemployed due to temporary suspension of their employment contract as a result of problems linked to industrial change;
- ▶ Workers employed part-time as a result of reorganisation at the workplace;
- ▶ Workers with prospects of employment in newly-created jobs following counselling on job opportunities and retraining.

Eligible measures

Training, advice and guidance; anticipation, promotion of networks and new employment opportunities; adaptation of structures and aid systems; information, dissemination and raising public awareness.

* **Objective 1:** economic adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind

Objective 2: economic conversion of declining industrial areas

Objective 5(b): economic diversification of rural areas

adapt

Practical guidelines

SCHEDULE ▶ Through the end of 1994, each Member State's operational programme for the initiatives will be negotiated with and adopted by the European Commission. ▶ Specific projects are being presented and selected in each Member State. In the first half of 1995, projects will be filed and a project selection procedure set up between the Commission and the Member States.

PARTICIPANTS Qualified participants include actors involved in training and employment in each Member State who have drawn up projects with transnational partners.

FURTHER INFORMATION Guides to the Community initiatives **EMPLOYMENT** and **ADAPT** are available from:

The European Commission
Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs Community Initiatives Unit

Mr Hugh Quigley
Head of Unit
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium.
Fax +32.2 296 62 80

Project promoters may contact heads of the European Social Fund offices in each Member State (Ed.: the addresses of the national Monitoring Committees for the Community initiatives in the individual Member States were not available at the time of going to press).

B

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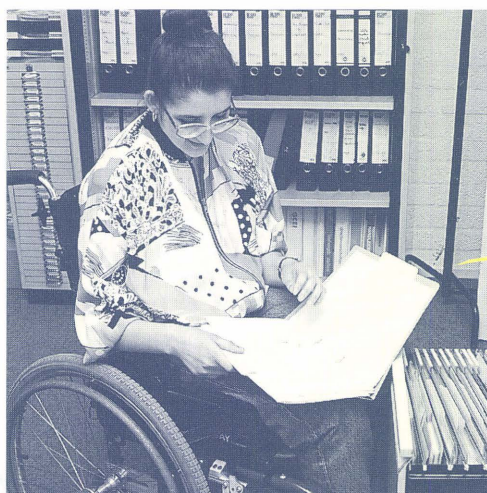
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The SOCRATES and LEONARDO programmes for the promotion of education and vocational training had not been adopted by the EU Council of education ministers at the time of going to press. The Commission's proposals for decisions on the programmes (*Ref.: COM (93) 686 final-Syn-94 and COM (93) 708 final*) may be obtained from: **Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth**, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium.





**Pass-the-parcel game between
Community initiatives? This could become
a reality if commitment towards
disabled people is as low as it seems.**



In addition to the HELIOS programme, institutions and projects in support of disabled people can, in principle, participate in other European Union programmes and initiatives. Foremost among these is the Community EMPLOYMENT-HORIZON initiative, which has a budget of ECU 730 million for 1994 to 1999 and expressly cites disabled people as a target group. The Member States and the Commission negotiated the Community support frameworks and operational programmes for the Community initiatives "in partnership" this autumn. Care should be taken in the selection of HORIZON projects to ensure – where not already the case – that the HELIOS experts in the Member States are included. This is in line with the Commission's proposal that national representatives of substantively related programmes (e.g. LEONARDO, HELIOS and the equal opportunities programmes) should be involved in the planning, follow-up and assessment of measures, as is already the case for the development of operational programmes for the Community initiatives. It is the Commission's view that this would promote multiplier effects between the various Community programmes and initiatives.

Besides HORIZON, a number of other Community programmes are also of interest. They are the Community initiatives EMPLOYMENT-NOW (ECU 370 million) and EMPLOYMENT-YOUTHSTART (ECU 300 million) and the programmes to promote education and vocational training, which are to become operational in 1995 under the collective titles of "SOCRATES" and "LEONARDO". In neither of the two employment initiatives indicated are disabled people expressly mentioned as target groups. However, any project – provided that it is in line with the appropriate assistance philosophy – is free to participate in other Community programmes.

The danger here is that the proposals from disabled people will be ignored or rejected. For example, an employment project for disabled women which applies for financing under the NOW programme could well be rejected on the grounds that the HORIZON programme is there to support disabled people.

Project promoters will therefore need a combination of cunning and persistence to gain access to other Community programmes. A list of Community programmes and a "user's guide" to application and implementation procedures would be helpful in this respect.

Hajo Friedrich,
freelance journalist



Luisa Diogo,
Executive/Consultant with
the Lisbon City Council
Department of Tourism.

Portrait

Is there inequality in equality?

"Tourism for All"

The main objectives of "Tourism for All" are to promote accessibility of mainstream tourist services and products to disabled clients; to agree on the use of access symbols, to gather and exchange information on accessible venues all over Europe and beyond, and to ensure that travel and tourism is open to everyone. The "Tourism for All" campaign currently involves disability organisations, tourist offices and, on an ad hoc basis, certain sectors of the tourist industry. Many of the disability organisations working in this field are members of Mobility International, who are currently preparing two tourism guides on behalf of DG XXIII of the European Commission: one for disabled travellers and one for the tourist industry.

For further information

on "Tourism for All", write to:

Mobility International,
Rue de Manchester,
25 B-1070 Brussels,
Belgium.

In Portugal

Turintegra,
Praça Dr. Fernando
Amado, 566 - E,
P-1900 Lisbon,
Portugal.

"When I turn up somewhere, people often ask: 'What does she' – or sometimes even worse – 'What does IT want'" says 37-year-old Luisa Diogo, a woman of short stature who knows exactly what she wants and where her talents and abilities lie.

After finishing High School, she went to Lisbon University and completed a degree in Management and Economics. While still studying, Luisa began her professional life as a typist and has pursued her career path steadily since then: first with the finance department in São Domingo De Rana, a town in her native Portugal, then with the Lisbon City Council in the capital. *"I felt once I was there, I could go places, if I worked hard enough"*, she says.

"I am conscious that as a disabled person and as a woman, I am doubly disadvantaged."

Luisa's real ambition was to work in tourism. She admits that *"for a disabled woman it was a tough struggle, to ascend from typing, through accounting, budgeting and financial planning in the Finance Department into the Department of Tourism."* An opportunity presented itself two years ago. At present, Luisa is an Executive / Consultant and her job entails the gathering and dissemination of information, collecting data on tourism products from the tourist industry, preparing information for publications, giving presentations at congresses, visiting trade fairs and promoting tourism inside Portugal in general.

In addition, Luisa is currently heading two projects which she initiated herself: setting up computerized information kiosks which distribute tourist information to the customer throughout Lisbon; and the establishment, development and promotion of the concept of "Tourism for All" in Portugal. The latter project is most dear to her heart, as it involves making tourism products accessible for disabled customers in an integrated environment.

"Although I have been very lucky in my career, I have experienced discrimination in my job. And I am conscious that as a disabled person and as a woman, I am doubly disadvantaged", Luisa says. *"People with fewer qualifications and who are less competent at their job have passed me by. Men, also disabled men, as well as non-disabled women are much more likely to be promoted. I feel that I just have to work so much harder, and that can be very stressful at times, and it does not seem fair."* Luisa's next career goal is to move from what is by and large an advisory position to that of a decision maker.

By Rita Kwiotek.

Commercial editor of the Irish Magazine
for disabled people "Insight"

A positive employment policy in an Irish company



Ann Dinnigan, Equality advisory officer with Aer Rianta, Dublin Airport is responsible within Aer Rianta's Equal Opportunities Department for positive policy on equal opportunities for disabled people - both as employees and as customers.

Rita Kwiotek talked to her about the Dublin airport company's core values in relation to the employment of disabled people.

"For the past 12 years we have had a highly proactive Equal Opportunities Programme", explains Ann Dinnigan, "which has mainly focused on the gender issue." Over two years ago, "our Equal Opportunities Manager, Rose Rafferty, identified the need to explore the disability issue," she says. During this time the question of disability was put to the staff and the feed-back was for positive action.

Positive work practices, fairness and awareness training programmes to bring about attitudinal change in relation to disabled people were developed within the organisation. The provision of facilities to cater for the needs of both disabled employees and customers is being made continuously. The need to encourage job applications from disabled people, including those with high level qualifications, was identified. An ongoing policy to provide equality training for all interviewers, to ensure disabled applicants of fair interview, was put into place. Today, a disabled applicant with appropriate qualifications can be expected to be treated as an equal in competing for employment; and applicants are kept on file in accordance with suitability and potential.

A special work experience programme for disabled people has been initiated - pursuing two aims: firstly, to provide work experience opportunities for disabled people with a company, in order to build up the confidence to go forward for employment, and secondly as a learning experience for the company itself, that disabled people can have the same ability as their non-disabled colleagues.

"Indeed, employing disabled people makes business sense, particularly for a customer-focused company", adds Ann Dinnigan. "It is important for our disabled customers to know that we have employees of their community on board. Within the company itself, promoting equality has provided us with a richer culture and a far more motivated and productive workforce than used to be the case in the past. As such, we want to develop our system so that in future we have an on-going welcome and a place for disabled people at all levels of employment in Aer Rianta."

Discussions on the employment of disabled people often highlight the necessity, for governments, to take strong measures in order to encourage employers to offer work to disabled people, and to create new employment opportunities. EU Member States have adopted a variety of measures in this area. For example: France applies a quota system, whereas Portugal has set up a system of subsidies to improve professional integration.



Measures to promote the employment of disabled people

Are quotas the solution to the employment problem? The aims of the French system

A novel system was adopted in France on 10 July 1987 to promote the employment of disabled workers (580,000 are recognised as such by the vocational guidance and occupational rehabilitation bodies, the COTOREPs) on the open labour market: any company with more than 20 employees must either reserve 6% of posts for disabled people or allocate an equivalent volume of work to sheltered workshops. Any employer who fails to fulfil this obligation has to pay an annual contribution to AGEFIPH, a body which finances various schemes to promote the employment of disabled people.

Seven years after the law was passed, what effect has it had and what are its limitations?

AGEFIPH's activity report highlights a number of positive points: "Despite the general gloom in the French economy," writes the Director, Mr Ségura, "the num-

ber of people who have found jobs through AGEFIPH has increased from 6,842 in 1991 to 27,147 in 1992 and to 41,493 in 1993."

Nevertheless, there is still a severe shortage of jobs on offer. Most employers prefer to pay the penalty: although the mandatory annual contribution to AGEFIPH is between FFr 10,000 and FFr 17,000 per unreserved post, the cost of an employee on the minimum wage is around FFr 85,000. As a result, just one business in three fulfils its quota. And the public services are far from setting an example; nor, moreover, are they subject to fines...

So a total of 70,000 disabled workers are still registered as unemployed with the Agence nationale pour l'Emploi (ANPE - the French public employment service), not to mention the doubtless even greater number of jobless disabled people who are not registered as either.

Why is this? The system is still found wanting in terms of effectiveness in a report published by the Cour des Comptes (*the French national audit office*) on 24 November 1993. The report lays most of the blame on deficiencies in the training system, stressing that 20 départements do not possess an occupational rehabilitation centre, and those which do, offer training ill-suited to the current jobs market. Another anomaly is that the Association pour la Formation professionnelle des Adultes, the foremost public body in the field of adult vocational training, does little to meet the needs of disabled people. Equally, provisions to promote appren-

ticeships and on-the-job training are almost entirely ineffectual, and, in the field, a great number of costly schemes of varying utility are being set up without sufficient consultation.

All the surveys show that employers will hire disabled people only if the person concerned is competent. Additional constraints or information are therefore unlikely to improve the situation; instead, people considered "ill-equipped" for competition on the jobs market need to be given better preparation. Hence AGE-FIPH's present policy - which has already produced results - of allocating a sizeable proportion of its budget (24% of assis-

tance expenditure out of a total income of FFfr 1.6 billion a year) to training and qualification schemes.

The law passed in 1987 set clear objectives for integration in France and provided considerable resources for their achievement. The period of experimentation is now drawing to a close and we are entering the "age of reason". If all goes well, the results should be commensurate with the high ideals of those involved.

France de Lagarde

*Editor of the monthly magazine
"DECLIC Familles et handicaps"*

Incentives for the employment of disabled people in Portugal

The Portuguese system for the employment of disabled people is geared to providing or restoring equal opportunities, i.e. removing potential obstacles to the occupational integration of workers with disabilities.

In practice, the system, commonly known as the incentive system, provides technical and financial measures of two kinds. The first set of measures aims to promote access for disabled workers to the open labour market by pointing up the essential responsibility of the employer for their social and occupational integration.

The objectives are:

- to eliminate or minimise obstacles to the occupational integration of disabled people (*elimination of architectural design problems, adaptation of the workplace, financial support for individual assistance, and the technical aids and wheelchairs which are vital for finding and/or keeping a job*);
- to stimulate and reward employers who hire disabled people (*financial compensation, integration awards, awards for merit and cuts in employers' social security contributions*).

The second set of measures is designed to help disabled people to set up in self-employment: fostering their professional and business skills as a means of promoting occupational integration.

The task of putting the measures into practice falls to the Portuguese Institute for Employment and Vocational Training. The institute has responsibility for the implementation of vocational training and employment measures in general, for which it relies on an extensive network of local organisations. These local employment centres are spread evenly across the country, each with a special unit for the occupational rehabilitation and integration of disabled people. The units are not limited to the implementation of administrative employment incentives: they also run a range of schemes to promote the employment of disabled people.

This policy is complemented by measures developed to stimulate the process of social integration, including:

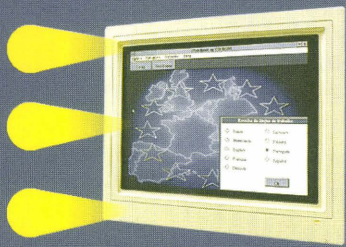
- Systematic awareness-raising among employers.
- The development of innovative experiments in the field of vocational training

and employment. These are local schemes based on a method of assistance which promotes the direct involvement of businesses in the occupational integration process from the outset. Research has shown that this type of intervention facilitates the subsequent integration of disabled people.

As to the effectiveness of the assistance system, it should be noted that placements obtained through these schemes lead on to jobs for disabled people in 75% of cases - a remarkable record in the short time since the launch of the system (1990).

Manuel Moura Fernandes

*Graduate in Sociology
Senior official with the rehabilitation
directorates of the Institute for
Employment and Vocational Training*



handynet

HANDYNET, the European communication and information network designed to promote the independence of disabled people, comprises a data base on CD-ROM and a rapidly expanding E-mail system.

The CD-ROM contains more than 40,000 items of information on the technical aids available in Europe, the companies which manufacture or market them and other organisations, and is the product of cooperation between several dozen groups and organisations from all over the European Union.

By way of example, HELIOSCOPE has asked Ms Celia García Gaitán, a member of HANDYNET's European technical coordination working party, to describe the way HANDYNET operates in Spain.

HANDYNET in Spain

In 1988, the Institute for Social Services (INSERSO) appointed CEAPAT (the State Centre for Independent Living and Technical Aids) as national coordination centre for the HANDYNET system in Spain. The centre collects information for the sub-modules on technical aids compensating for motor impairment and technical aids compensating for communication impairment, and coordinates data collection (checking relevance, quality, comprehensiveness and format) with the other contributing centres:

- the Centre for Curriculum Development, which operates under the authority of the Ministry for Education and Science and is responsible for the collection of data for the educational software submodule;
- the technical unit of ONCE (Spain's national association of blind people), which collects the data for the submodule on technical aids compensating for visual impairment.

Information and/or advice: the Spanish HANDYNET network

The national authorities are aware of the vital need to distribute information on technical aids throughout the country, given the lack of specialised facilities in this field. Accordingly, in 1991, they made the HANDYNET data base available to the Autonomous Communities, the associations and federations of disabled people, universities, researchers, etc., in order to make the technical, practical and commercial data it contains available to all users, from a variety of sources.

The HORIZON initiative enabled the launch of 30 HANDYNET centres in 14 Autonomous Communities. The centres provide information and/or advice, within the limits of their human and material resources, on the first module (technical aids of all types: communication, educational software, compensation for visual and motor impairments, etc.).

The diversity of the 30 advice and information centres further enhances the system's technical potential and reflects its versatility. They include associations, foundations, centres belonging to the Autonomous Communities, universities, specialist documentation centres on social services, centres for disabled people, independent living centres, administrative departments and education centres.

Putting the end user first

Generally speaking, the advice and information centres are located in organisations, associations and departments which are the first to be contacted by disabled people. The centres of the IASS (Andalusian Institute for Social Services) and the AEEC (the Association for Special Education of Cantabria) and other centres such as SIRIUS (Catalan government) and the Independent Living Centre of Alava provincial council are all specialised in the themes covered by the HANDYNET data base. And associations and foundations play a major role in the decentralised dissemination of information at local level.

The information centres are located in organisations specialised in providing information on social and educational services, such as Redinet Canarias, the Fuente Clara centre in Avila and the SIIS documentation centre (which operates under the authority of the royal association for care and prevention for disabled people).

handynet



The system is being extended to accommodate the needs of elderly people, given the strong demand for information on certain types of technical aids for that particular section of the population.

The network's development reflects a clear trend towards geographical decentralisation. Each Autonomous Community has an information centre for professionals and researchers, and an advice and information centre which provides not only information on technical aids but also guidance and counselling for end users.

The cost-efficiency and functioning of the system are reviewed annually. The centres are the best test-bed for identifying the system's shortcomings, proposing improvements and recording the expectations of the very heterogeneous group of end users.

A list of addresses is available from HELIOSCOPE or from

CEPAT - INSERSO,
c/ Los Extremeños, 1
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Tel: +34.1 778 90 61,
fax: +34.1 778 48 57



Human rights

for the

1994

European

Day

In October 1994, three disabled representatives from each EU Member State and one representative from each European NGO member of the European Disability Forum met in Brussels at a Human Rights Meeting to discuss the following topics: a European definition of "Disabled Person"; eugenics, bio-ethics and euthanasia; Independent Living; and sexuality.

As a result of these discussions a report, with an agreed resolution, was presented to the European Parliament on 1 December.

European definition of "Disabled Person"

The WHO international classification defines disability as a "problem" of the individual. Disabled people all over the world are understanding increasingly that this medical approach is not the reality. Disability arises from the interaction of the impairment, condition of functional limitation, with a society which produces barriers to integration and understanding. Appropriate habilitation alone, however good, cannot overcome the environmental and attitudinal barriers with which we are confronted. It is these barriers that cause the real disability. Society produces, even

Human rights

if this is done with the best of intentions, solutions to our disability that only increase our difference, isolation and segregation: solutions of special transport, special schools, special institutions. For us, disabled people, to agree a collective definition of disability will therefore be a major step in achieving our human rights - because if disability is socially constructed, then there has to be a social solution.

Eugenics, bio-ethics and euthanasia

The advance of medical science has increased the many opportunities for eugenics - the practice of improving the genetic stock of a population. At one end of the eugenics spectrum is the welcome eradication of diseases like small-pox, at the other end is the eradication of people who are seen as unacceptable by a ruling race, i.e. ethnic cleansing. In between these two poles are disabled people who personify for some non-disabled people what eugenics is about.

Bio-ethics underlines the concept that all physical and mental imperfection is unacceptable. There is little discussion on the value of human life, the negative attitudes and social barriers that are the real reason why society believes that certain conditions such as spina bifida or muscular dystrophy should be genetically eradicated. These ethical judgements are so often made by non-disabled people who, out of kindness or ignorance, cannot bear the thought of other people's suffering. But it is we, disabled people, many of us with conditions that it is being suggested should be genetically mutated, who should be leaders in the discussions.

Independent living

Independent living, the concept of the empowerment of the disabled individual and their ability to control their own daily lives, is relevant to all disabled people, whatever their impairment, and should be the objective of furtherance of disabled people's human rights. Disabled people in Europe have the unique opportunity to clarify the meaning of independent living and provide a whole range of solutions for its practical implementation: from services, information, legislation, benefits to housing, aids and adaptations, to access to the environment, education and employment.

At its most effective, independent living is the comprehensive self-help movement of disabled people at the local level. Two issues which are unique to independent living are personal assistance and direct payments. Through hiring assistants with money provided directly to us by statutory authorities, disabled people can retain choice and control over their own lives, and cut down the considerable costs of institutional or community care provision.

Sexuality

Negative attitudes to disabled people and the concentration on our impairment have had a profound effect on our sexuality. Marriage has not been considered as an option for many disabled people, nor child-birth. Disabled people who have lived most of their lives in institutions have not received sex education and in many European countries disabled women have been encouraged to be sterilised, for no other reason than it would be easier for personal assistants (see Report from Disabled People's Parliament, 1993). These attitudes have particularly affected disabled women, and people with severe or learning difficulties. Discussion around this topic at a European level, and from the disabled people's perspective, will raise awareness and is the starting point for necessary policies and legislation to support recognition of disabled people as sexual beings.

By DPI

European Union Committee

European Disability Forum sets up a working group on the White Paper

The European Disability Forum welcomes the White Paper on Social Policy and the recognition of the needs of disabled people in the context of equal opportunities for all. The Forum at its last meeting agreed to set up a small working group to examine the implementation of the Commission's action plan and the appointment of a EU rapporteur on the United Nations Standard Rules for persons with disabilities on the equalisation of opportunities to support the work of the UN Special rapporteur on the Standard Rules. A final decision will be made at the next meeting of the Forum in December.

Further information

on the White Paper on "European Social Policy, a way forward for the Union" see p 5.

The UN Standard Rules are available from the HELIOS Information Service.

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EUCREA

Bringing disabled people's artistic potential to the public

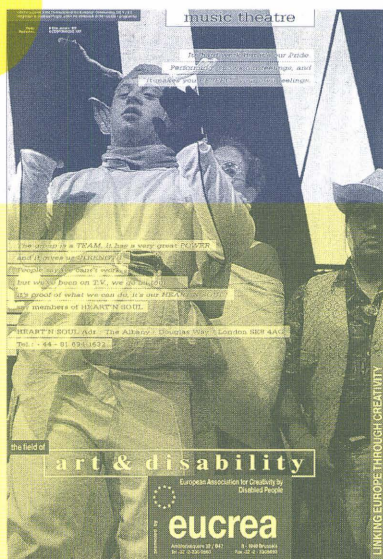


Photo: EUCREA

"It has very great power, people say it cannot work, but they have been on TV and they go on tour, the group is a team, it has very great power, it's Heart'n Soul."

A growing awareness during the 1980s of the role which creativity plays in the participation of disabled people in society led to the foundation of EUCREA. Since then, the organisation has been instrumental in developing the field of creativity at European level, in close liaison with grass-roots projects. As a result, many artists and projects have achieved professional standards.

Being disabled is not a handicap in the current art scene. Quite the opposite, disability itself is a source of distinctive, unique artwork. A famous German disabled actor says his public feels that his performance gives a text a new dimension which a non-disabled actor could not achieve - because he brings in his own, his unique life experience.

For a person faced constantly with stigmatisation, physical and psychological barriers, and lack of communication, creativity can become the vehicle for self-expression, self-determination and fulfilment. To put it like Pino Fruimento, a professional actor with learning difficulties: *"When you are off the stage, you start to worry. When I am off stage, oh no! everything has gone wrong in my life. But not really. Life on the stage is happy."*

In view of the estimated 10 % of the EU population with some form of permanent disability, fostering the participation of disabled people in European cultural life is a major challenge. Although a patronising attitude towards disabled people's art work still persists, public opinion appreciates more and more the innovatory concepts of disability arts.

The process of integrating disabled artists in mainstream European culture is thus an ongoing objective for EUCREA and for all other organisations and grass-roots projects working in the field. However, overcoming public and government's attitudes towards disability arts is not an easy task. Some ministries dealing with cultural affairs have implemented complementary funding policies and technical assistance to support disabled artists and organisations working in this field. Some European Commission directorates-general have developed policies in favour of disabled people. So far, however, EUCREA's proposal to have this policy equally applied to the European Commission's Directorate General for Culture has been refused. But we are optimistic and hope that those responsible will follow the example of their colleagues.



Photo: EUCREA

Most of the Station 17 musicians do not use their instruments in the usual way.

EUCREA is a European NGO for creativity by and for disabled people. Its structure is based on a network of national organisations in the 12 EU Member States. Its national committees, in collaboration with other disability organisations, develop projects in the field of creativity and disability according to national priorities; set up campaigns promoting the integration of disabled people through creativity; and act as bodies to disseminate the policy of the European Commission in terms of mainstreaming and project funding.

For further information

EUCREA,
Square Ambiorix 32, box 47
B-1040 Brussels, Belgium.
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Photograph: Lebenshilfe/Kohn

Duisburg, September 1994: the congress of the German national association Lebenshilfe für geistig Behinderte E.V. marks the beginning of a new era for people with learning difficulties.

in brief

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
FOR EMPLOYMENT,
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS



Social Europe
DGV

Germany: strong protest against the Council of Europe's draft bioethics convention

The German national association Lebenshilfe für Geistig Behinderte (counselling for people with learning difficulties) has voiced strong protest against the draft Bioethics Convention which is due to be adopted in January 1995 at a plenary meeting of the Assembly of the Council of Europe. The convention provides for a relaxation of the ban on experiments on embryos up to 14 days old. Moreover, a legal basis is to be created to permit non-therapeutic medical intervention amounting to an intrusion on the physical integrity of disabled and elderly people and people with a drug addiction who are judged to be legally incompetent.

It is appalling that these people should be talked of as mere experimental subjects, and that

medical intervention should not be conditional upon their personal consent, the consent of the carers and approval by a court competent for matters of guardianship. Instead it will be enough for the intervention to serve what are deemed to be higher interests. Not only does this reveal a mind-set which views the lives of disabled people as inferior, but it is also a flagrant violation of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany. Last summer, the German Bundestag and Bundesrat voted by an overwhelming majority to add to the text of the Basic Law an affirmation that "No one shall be disadvantaged on the grounds of disability".

Source: Bundesvereinigung Lebenshilfe für geistig Behinderte e.V.

Italy: founding of the Italian Federation for Overcoming Disability (FISH)

On 25 June in Rome, over 25 national organisations and regional coalitions of associations for disabled people and their families joined to form a national federation. The aim of the new body, the first of its kind in Italy, is to defend the rights of disabled people more effectively by speaking with one voice. In the words of the federation's chairman, Mario Battaglia, "the purpose is to open up new horizons for disabled people and ensure an independent life for them and their families by overcoming discrimination and exclusion, and establishing the necessary conditions for equal opportunities in society."

Giampiero Griffo
*National league for disabled
people's right to work*

Contact address

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UK British Government withdraws Priority Supplier's Scheme

The British Government has withdrawn a scheme that helps 200 sheltered workshops in Britain because it contravenes a European Union directive which requires all public service contracts to be awarded on a fair and open basis. The Priority Supplier's Scheme (PSS) gave firms employing disabled workers an edge in bidding for Government contracts. The Government's decision means that workshops like, for example, Remploy, which employs more than 8,700 disabled people in 95 factories with most of its

textile business from the Ministry of Defence, will now compete on level terms with the risk of loss of thousands of disabled people's jobs. Remploy chief executive Tony Withey said: "We want the scheme retained because the Ministry of Defence is our largest contract and we are facing unprecedented competition from north Africa and eastern Europe."

The abolition of the PSS has put the spotlight on sheltered employment in the European Union - and in particular on the vari-

ous methods adopted by individual Member States to support sheltered workshops, which include wage subsidies, tax exemptions, and reductions in VAT. It is necessary now to review this with a view to ensuring that jobs of disabled people are protected. This must include establishing clear definitions of sheltered work and sheltered workshops as well as the necessary measures.

Tim Russel, reporter
Disability Now

in the next issue

Theme
Education

Forum
Focus on disabled women /
NGO activities in central
and eastern Europe

The European Parliament
Party Disablement Group

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