Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 925 (1981)[1]

Council of Europe's contribution to the International Year for Disabled Persons

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Welcoming the fact that the United Nations General Assembly recently proclaimed 1981 "International Year for Disabled Persons" ;

2. Being aware that roughly one person in ten suffers from a physical, mental or sensory disability;

3. Observing that the Council of Europe has in the past carried out a very great number of outstanding activities on behalf of physically, mentally and sensorially disabled persons, and therefore deliberately limiting its proposals to fields in which there is still room for improvement and innovation;

4. Noting, however, that not all member states of the Council of Europe have taken part in most of these activities, which thus remain restricted to a limited group of states, namely Austria, Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and recently Spain, in the framework of a Partial Agreement ;

5. Convinced, however, that even countries with more modest economic and social resources could and should endeavour to meet the specific needs of disabled persons ;

6. Considering that a survey should be made on the occasion of the International Year for Disabled Persons of action so far taken by the Council of Europe on behalf of that category of persons, and that this survey should provide the starting-point for reflection on the possibility of conducting a renewed campaign in this field and for the updating of certain past proposals ;

7. Considering that it would be highly desirable that all twenty-one member states of the organisation participate in the activities in favour of handicapped persons ;

8. Considering that two of the main problems facing disabled persons are, first, social isolation due partly to the fact that the general public is poorly informed and partly to an inadequate housing policy which encourages segregation rather than integration in the population and, second, the loss of income often resulting from additional expenditure incurred on account of the disability and from the difficulty of finding well-paid employment ;

9. Recognising the importance, from the standpoint of European solidarity, of according to disabled persons visiting or temporarily residing in other member countries the priorities and facilities to which they are normally entitled at home, giving more weight to the seriousness of the disability than to its origin ;

10. Considering, therefore, that on the occasion of the International Year for Disabled Persons the Council of Europe could also undertake specific action in these areas,

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1. Assembly debate on 3 October 1981 (13th Sitting) (see Doc. 4754, report of the Committee on Social and Health Questions). Text adopted by the Assembly on 3 October 1981 (13th Sitting).

11. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

a. invite those member states which are not taking part in the Council of Europe's activities relating to disabled persons to do so as soon as possible ;

b. instruct a committee composed of particularly competent persons ;

1. to prepare a survey of the implementation of Council of Europe resolutions and recommendations concerning protection and assistance for disabled persons ;

2. to update past proposals concerning education, employment, housing, rehabilitation and transport for the disabled ;

3. to renew the drive to establish a genuine European rehabilitation programme, based on appraisal of past activities and experience in member countries ;

4. to examine and improve access to public and other offices, by facilitating the entrance to these buildings for disabled persons ;

5. to make a special study concerning the installation in public places of the electrical loop system which operates in conjunction with most modern hearing aids used by those disabled by partial deafness ;

6. to examine the situation of the young chronic sick who, because of their disabilities, may spend very long periods in hospitals and, because of the shortage of accommodation, are put into wards normally used by geriatric patients ;

c. invite member states :

1. to define the rights of disabled persons in a fashion which is clear, simple and easily accessible, so that they may avail themselves of them without being subjected to discriminatory procedures ;

2. to foster parliamentary and public awareness of the rights of disabled persons and, in order to ensure that continuing progress is made, to appoint a minister with specific responsibilities for the disabled ;

3. to promote equal opportunities for the disabled on the employment market, and accordingly to pass laws obliging employers with a given number of staff to employ a certain percentage of disabled persons, and in particular to ensure that, where protected employment facilities exist for blind persons, there should be no legal barrier placed upon the individual to prohibit him from moving from protected accommodation into open employment and vice versa;

d. invite member states, excluding France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy, which have already made known their intention of doing so in the resolution of 4 November 1977, to associate themselves with the work on a European Card for substantially disabled persons, giving them the same status and facilities when visiting other countries, taking particular account of the fact that disabilities are becoming less and less noticeable, thanks to modern equipment ;

e. request the Secretary General on the one hand to eliminate the existing architectural obstacles in order to facilitate access by physically disabled persons to the Palais de l'Europe, including the Assembly Chamber, and on the other to improve Council of Europe recruitment policy as regards the disabled &ndash ; the objective being at least 2 % of the staff &ndash ; and to report to the Assembly on this subject ;

f. institute a special Council of Europe Prize, with an initial value of 10 000 French Francs, awarded annually by the Parliamentary Assembly to the European local authority, association, institute, corporate body or individual which has contributed most to the welfare of the disabled and their involvement in the social life of the community concerned, notably by adapting housing and surrounding amenities such as roads and access to buildings, parks and public recreation centres.