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Equality and inclusion for people with disabilities

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2064 (2015)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2064 (2015) on “Equality and inclusion for people with disabilities”, which it has communicated to the European Committee for Social Cohesion, Human Dignity and Equality (CDDECS)/Committee of Experts on the Rights of People with Disabilities (DECS-RPD) and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) for information and possible comments.

2. The Committee of Ministers underlines that equality and inclusion of people with disabilities are the key messages of the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 as well as of the other relevant recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member States, including Recommendations CM/Rec(2013)2 on ensuring full inclusion of children and young persons with disabilities into society and CM/Rec(2013)3 on ensuring full, equal and effective participation of persons with disabilities in culture, sports, tourism and leisure activities. Whilst stressing the significant progress made by member States over the last decade, it would agree that a gap still remains between international standards and practice.

3. In response to the specific issues raised in the recommendation, the Committee of Ministers would inform the Assembly that an evaluation of the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 implementation in member States is currently ongoing. The Committee values the Parliamentary Assembly's contribution to this work which aims to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the Action Plan implementation and provide a general overview of the present situation of people with disabilities in Europe. It considers it relevant that a post-2015 Council of Europe disability framework be devised on the basis of the results of the evaluation, to be focused on defined priorities and areas where the Council of Europe can provide an added-value, having in mind relevant international standards, notably the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. It has instructed the relevant intergovernmental committee to elaborate proposals for such a five-year framework post 2015. The process should take place in close co-operation with various stakeholders, including the United Nations, the European Union, and representative organisations of people with disabilities and youth and youth NGOs as it considers this both crucial and beneficial.

4. The results of the evaluation process will be presented and discussed at the high-level closing conference of the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 to be held in Dublin, Ireland on 5 and 6 November 2015.

5. The Committee of Ministers would also stress the importance of disability mainstreaming in all branches of authorities and areas of life of society as set out in the Disability Action Plan. The Committee of Ministers considers that the Council of Europe should also endeavour to apply this approach in its activities, particularly in those related to combating violence and hate speech, but not limited to them. It is also important to address other issues such as discrimination against persons with disabilities, for example in situations such as when applying for work, education or housing, or those discriminated on multiple grounds. In this respect, awareness-raising of individuals, and with institutions such as ministries, schools, civil society and labour organisations, is essential with a view to removing societal barriers to the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

1. Adopted at the 1234th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (10 September 2015).



6. The Committee of Ministers notes the Parliamentary Assembly recommendation calling for the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) to ensure disability-inclusive project financing that corresponds with the principles enshrined in the Disability Action Plan 2006-2015. In this respect, the Committee of Ministers would recall that Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1592 (2003) "Towards full social inclusion of people with disabilities", was taken into account during the revision of the CEB fields of action and resulted in the introduction of target groups to include other vulnerable populations, such as people with disabilities. The CEB finances projects in favour of people with disabilities across all four sectorial lines of action and, in particular, in the sectors of 'Aid to refugees, migrants and displaced persons', 'Housing for low-income persons', 'Health' and 'Education and vocational training'.

7. The CEB Loan and Project Financing Policy requires that construction projects, specifically for social housing, correspond to national legislation. Furthermore, the CEB Handbook for the Preparation and Implementation of Projects states that, "all CEB operations are granted in accordance with specific technical and social development criteria and in strict conformity with environmental, procurement and compliance guidelines and policies," and that access to persons with reduced mobility is to be facilitated, especially for infrastructure projects related to health and education. Finally, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe issues an opinion on admissibility in terms of compliance with the Council of Europe's political and social objectives for each project that the Bank submits to its Administrative Council for approval. The admissibility opinion ensures that the project objectives are in line with the rights set out in relevant Council of Europe standards.