

## **RECOMMENDATION 1185 (1992)<sup>1</sup> on rehabilitation policies for the disabled**

1. The International Year for Disabled Persons was proclaimed in 1981 and prompted the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly to adopt Recommendation 925 (1981). The year 1993 will mark the end of the Decade for the Disabled and should provide an opportunity to take stock of progress and to consider what remains to be done, particularly as it will be necessary in 1993, with the completion of the Single Market and freedom of movement for persons, to create a European social area from which people with disabilities are not excluded. Disabled people should, on the contrary, be able to help devise solutions for everyone, on an equal footing with others.

2. To men and women with a disability, being independent means being able to live like ordinary men and women ; it does not mean being passive recipients of assistance, but it means having a wide choice of opportunities and being responsible for one's own life.

3. A disability is a restriction caused by physical, psychological, sensory, social, cultural, legal or other obstacles that prevent disabled people from becoming integrated and taking part in family life and the community on the same footing as everyone else. Society has a duty to adapt its standards to the specific needs of disabled people in order to ensure that they can lead independent lives.

4. Yet how many people are there of whom we say that we accept the fact that they are different, but in respect of whom society still makes very little effort to allow them to make their presence felt ? We do not know how many such people there are, nor what their needs are, nor, in particular, what their wishes are. There is no information or evaluation system whereby it is possible, on the basis of reliable statistics and reviewable indicators, to obtain information and make forecasts that are comparable from one European country to another.

5. The Council of Europe has done very valuable work in this field, but unfortunately its work has often been restricted to a small number of member states ; the Assembly itself knows very little about the experts' proposals and has not, to date, had an opportunity to forward its own conclusions to national parliaments because of the limitations of the communications system at the Council of Europe.

6. The time has come for the Assembly to call on the governments and the agencies concerned in its member states :

i. to ensure that the interests and needs of disabled people are taken into account ; to provide for the co-ordination by local authorities and associations of the various measures taken to this end ; and to ensure their coherence, comprehensiveness and effectiveness by setting up, if necessary, a central unit for concerted policy decision-making, placed under the authority of a minister : the object being to ensure proper co-ordination and effectiveness, not to bring services and initiatives under the direct authority of the state ;

ii. to strive for and encourage genuine active participation by disabled people in family life, the community and society, and in the organisation of their own lives ; to guarantee recognition and effective exercise of all their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights ; and to ensure in any event the proper representation of their interests and needs ;

iii. in order to give people with disabilities opportunities to be as fully involved as possible in society and working life and to be as independent as possible, to give priority to :

*a.* preventive measures, both genetic and medical, in the light of new scientific discoveries but also of bioethical hazards and restrictions ; special attention should be paid to infant mental health and neuro-psychiatry centres because of the crucial effects of any action taken at an age when children are developing ;

*b.* education and integration at school ;

*c.* reinforcing home services and assistance to families, with special attention being paid to severely disabled people and dependent elderly people ;

*d.* providing placement and vocational guidance and training services and passing legislation allowing disabled people to obtain ordinary employment in keeping with the complex developments in the labour-market or, in the most serious cases, employment in co-operatives and sheltered workshops ;

*e.* setting up a network of local and regional rehabilitation and social back-up services, to be run as far as possible by family and voluntary associations ;

*f.* guaranteeing ease of access to buildings, and overcoming visual, auditory and psychological obstacles to communication ;

*g.* adopting the necessary fiscal and supportive measures for families and associations ;

*h.* defining European standards for the training of specialised medical and technical personnel, care being taken to avoid confusion between responsibilities and above all to establish that medical diagnosis and treatment be entrusted only to doctors with special training in the field of rehabilitation ;

*i.* supporting every effort aimed :

- at helping and standing by and improving awareness of the problems of disabled people ;

- at backing charity initiatives ;

- at surmounting obstacles, especially those of a psychological character, between disabled people and their families and the rest of society ;

*j.* amending the Social Charter of the Council of Europe to include the rights and safeguards needed to ensure that a comprehensive rehabilitation policy is fully and coherently applied, as proposed in Assembly Recommendation 1168 (1991).

7. The Assembly recommends moreover that the Committee of Ministers :

*i.* seek to associate the governments of all member states, and if possible of all European states, in the activities of the Council of Europe for the benefit of people with disabilities, which may be physical, psychological and/or sensorial in origin, and to encourage the holding of periodic conferences of European specialised ministers ;

*ii.* promote the use of the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) having regard to the work of the Council of Europe within the frame of its Partial Agreement ;

*iii.* invite the government of each member state to describe what steps have been taken to implement Recommendation No. R (92) 6 on a coherent policy for people with disabilities ;

*iv.* to provide for the setting up of a European information and evaluation system for obtaining reliable statistics, calculated with regularly updated indicators, in order to provide information and forecasts that are comparable from one European country to another.

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1. *Assembly debate* on 7 May 1992 (6th Sitting) (see Doc. 6581, report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, Rapporteurs : Mr Foschi and Mr Schwimmer).

*Text adopted by the Assembly* on 7 May 1992 (6th Sitting).