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## PRESS RELEASE

### Integration of people with disabilities has to start in childhood

**By adopting an own-initiative report on the situation of women with disabilities in the European Union, the European Parliament calls on the Commission and Member States to "ensure the removal of existing barriers and obstacles, including architectural barriers, with a view to creating equal rights and opportunities for women and girls with disabilities to play a part in family, political, cultural, social and professional life".**

MEPs believe in the report drafted by Esther **HERRANZ GARCÍA** (EPP-ED, ES) that one of the main objectives which the European Union should set itself is to improve the quality of life of disabled people and their families and ensure that they are fully integrated into society. This, they note, can be done " particularly through better implementation of Community anti-discrimination and gender-equality legislation and better use of the opportunities provided by relevant Community programmes and the ESF". Parliament calls on Member States to take full account of the needs of persons with disabilities and the special needs of women in all national, regional and local policies, particularly those covering town planning, education, employment, housing, transport, health and social services.

#### **Integration from childhood onwards**

MEPs stress that it is important to actively combat segregation of people with disabilities from childhood onwards. The Commission and Member States are asked to promote pilot schemes and tried and tested procedures for integrative establishments from kindergarten, school and training to professional life.

MEPs also believe that in order to improve the access to the labour market for persons with disabilities use should be made of all possible incentives, including tax breaks, to encourage employers to take on persons with disabilities and to tailor working hours to the needs of parents bringing up children with disabilities. The report calls on the Commission and Member States to incorporate the concept of "flexibility" into matters relating to disability, since each case is different.

#### **Society responsible for the care for people with disabilities**

Parliament calls on the Commission and the Member States "to seek to make responsibility for the care and participation of people with disabilities the responsibility of society as a whole rather than that only of the families of persons with disabilities". Therefore, necessary measures should be drawn up to assist the work of families and organisations that support both people with disabilities and their families.

MEPs also call on the Commission and the Member States to put in place legislation ensuring independent living for disabled women and men, acknowledging that this is a fundamental right that must be respected.

## **Better protection against violence**

In the report MEPs express their shock at the fact that women with disabilities are three times as likely to be the victims of violence as women without disabilities (nearly 80% of women with disability are victims of violence) and they suggest the Daphne Programme should also to be used to combat this type of violence.

MEPs believe the Commission and the Member States should "put in place effective legislation and policies focusing on women and children, which will ensure that instances of exploitation, violence and sexual abuse against persons with disabilities - within their places of residence and elsewhere - are identified and investigated and, where appropriate, lead to prosecution".


## **Role of media**


The report also stresses "the need to raise the profile and improve the image of women with disabilities in the media, which will make the broad public more aware of their daily lives and give them greater opportunities to express themselves and take part in social and political life".

## **Contact:**

Jana JALVI  
Press Service

: [femm-press@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:femm-press@europarl.europa.eu)

: (32-2) 28 32192 (BXL)

: (33) 388 1 74794 (STR)