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Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

2010/2272(INI)

25.5.2011

OPINION

of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on the mobility and inclusion of people with disabilities and the European
Disability Strategy 2010-2020
(2010/2272(INI))

Rapporteur: Oreste Rossi

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

- having regard to Articles 2, 10, 19 and 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 15 November 2010 entitled ‘European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: a renewed commitment to a barrier-free Europe’ (COM(2010)0636 final),
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹ (the UN Convention), the first legally binding international human rights instrument to which the EU and its Member States became parties,
- having regard to the proposed directive on the equal treatment of persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation,
- having regard to its legislative resolution of 8 September 2010 on the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States: Part II of the Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines²,
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 12 January 2011 entitled ‘The Annual Growth Survey: advancing the EU's comprehensive response to the crisis’ (COM(2011)0011), and the draft joint employment report annexed thereto,
- having regard to the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States of 12 January 2011 (COM(2011)0006),
- having regard to the Council Decision of 26 November 2009 concerning the conclusion, by the European Community, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,
- having regard to Articles 1, 21 and 35 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

¹ Agreed in 2007 and signed by all Member States and the EU; ratified on 15 October 2010 by 16 of the Member States (BE, CZ, DK, DE, ES, FR, IT, LV, LT, HU, AT, PT, SI, SK, SE, UK) and in the process of being ratified by the others. The UN Convention will be binding on the EU and will form part of the EU legal order.

² Texts Adopted, P7_TA(2010)0309.

- having regard to its resolution of 8 March 2011 on reducing health inequalities in the EU¹,
 - having regard to the Council Conclusions on Common values and principles in European Union Health Systems (2006/C146/01),
 - having regard to the Council Conclusions of 8 June 2010 on ‘Equity and health in all policies: solidarity in health’,
- A. whereas one in six people in the European Union has a disability, which may range from mild to severe²,
 - B. whereas over a third of people aged over 75 have a disability and, as a result of demographic change, the number of people with disabilities is expected to rise,
 - C. whereas people with disabilities constitute a vulnerable group, among whom the rate of poverty is 70% higher than average; whereas this higher exposure to the risk of poverty is the result of often limited access not only to employment and training, but also to healthcare and appropriate treatment,
 - D. whereas a fresh look needs to be taken at the way in which support is provided to, and the arrangements for the inclusion of, the most vulnerable people; whereas if those support activities were remunerated, they would account for nearly 50% of GDP (according to a report by the Stiglitz Commission in France),
 - E. whereas the success of the Europe 2020 strategy, the objective of which is to develop European growth which is smart (based on innovation and research), sustainable and inclusive, will necessarily require structural improvements as regards the mobility and inclusion of people with disabilities,
 - F. whereas, at a time of economic crisis, it is urgent and essential to redesign national public health systems to make them more efficient, balanced and viable,
 - G. whereas it should be emphasised that the majority of people with disabilities are frequently unable fully to participate in economic activities in society as a result of physical – and other – obstacles and discrimination or social stigma,
 - H. whereas lower rates of participation in general education and in the labour market lead to income inequalities and poverty for people with disabilities, as well as to social exclusion and isolation,
 - I. whereas in the 16-19 age group the rate of non-participation in education is 37% for considerably restricted people, and 25% for those restricted to some extent, as against 17% for those not restricted,
 - J. whereas the rate of employment for people with disabilities is only around 50%, while high-quality jobs ensure economic independence, foster personal achievement and offer the best protection against poverty,

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0081.

² EU Labour Force Survey ad hoc module on employment of disabled people (LFS AHM), 2002.

1. Reiterates that all health services in the European Union should be based on the fundamental values of universality, access to high-quality care and solidarity;
2. Stresses the need for a new, efficient approach to disability, starting with the creation of a more effective mechanism to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the European Disability Strategy; stresses in this context how important it is that people with disabilities, and civil society organisations working in this area, should be involved in this work;
3. Calls on Member States to adopt, with the support of the Commission, specific social measures to ensure equal access to health care, including high-quality health and rehabilitation services for people with mental and physical disabilities;
4. Calls on Member States to guarantee the equal right of all people with disabilities to live in the community, with the same choices as others, thereby ensuring their full inclusion and participation in their community; guarantee that people with disabilities can choose where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to opt for a particular living arrangement; and guarantee them access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance, to prevent isolation or segregation from their community;
5. Calls on the Member States, through the ‘open method of coordination’, to exchange information, ideas and best practice on the provision of long-term care for people with physical and mental disabilities and to adopt measures and minimum professional standards in order to:
 - (a) reduce health and welfare inequalities and ensure safeguards are in place for people with disabilities in the community and in care settings;
 - (b) tackle the abuse of people with disabilities,
 - (c) provide adequate, wide-ranging rehabilitation services which are based on the desire of people with disabilities for autonomy and which seek to reintegrate them into the world of work, facilitate the transition from institutional to community-based care and promote mental health services based on the European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being and the development of early intervention and personal assistance programmes, including needs-assessment services,
 - (d) support the families of patients and professionals working in national health systems by means of targeted information and training measures and by involving patients’ associations in decision-making and monitoring processes;
 - (e) help disseminate information and communications technologies to promote the high-quality care within families for, and the independence of, people with disabilities and opportunities for them to work competitively;
 - (f) set up an ‘integrated one-stop shop for access to services for people with disabilities’ in order to go beyond the limited approach taken by existing social and health advisory facilities;

- (g) ensure a better response to the specific needs of workers suffering from disabling diseases and chronic conditions in terms of their workplace integration and retention;
 - (h) focus on the prevention of disabilities and the prevention of secondary conditions of either a mental or a physical nature which often develop as a result of an individual's primary impairment;
6. Calls on the Member States to reduce the burden on those who care for older people or people with disabilities and – to enable carers to take up employment – set up integrated care systems;
 7. Calls on the Member States to take measures to recognise sign language and Braille;
 8. Emphasises the need to give young people with disabilities effective, tailor-made support as well as real and equal opportunities in terms of physical, sensory and cognitive access to education, employment, culture, leisure, sports, social activities and involvement in the conduct of public and civil affairs;
 9. Calls on the Commission to promote initiatives geared to the requirements of people with disabilities or sick people who cannot find appropriate solutions to their problems because those solutions are not considered profitable by companies which produce nutritional or prosthetic aids;
 10. Recalls Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in which the State Parties undertake to ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability, and that reasonable accommodation is provided for the individual's requirements, together with the necessary support; therefore, while highlighting the need to provide inclusive education and lifelong learning for disabled pupils and students and a personalised inclusion system for the early identification of special needs, urges the Member States to fulfil the commitments referred to above;
 11. Calls on the Council and the Member States to restructure failing healthcare systems and to rationalise public spending on healthcare in order to offer fair access to high-quality healthcare, without discrimination, to people with disabilities throughout the EU; encourages them, therefore, to promote the transition from institutional to community-based care by using the Structural Funds and the Rural Development Fund;
 12. Stresses the need to make the most of public awareness-raising campaigns and to analyse more effectively the information on disability that is collected through social surveys in the European Union;
 13. Stresses the importance of ensuring that more people with disabilities and workers suffering from disabling diseases and chronic conditions either remain at work or enter employment by means of methods such as the imposition of specific quotas on employers or measures to adapt jobs to the needs of job-seekers and workers with disabilities or subsidised insurance contributions; calls on the EU institutions to set an example as regards the employment of people with disabilities and urges the Member States to pursue this strategy as well;

14. Calls on the Commission to promote the establishment of a European network of accredited centres for the diagnosis and treatment of specific forms of rare diseases, in order to coordinate and monitor their activities and the benefits they offer patients;
15. Calls on the Commission to stop prosecuting sheltered workshops and social enterprises which receive State subsidies, as it has done in the past, on the grounds of distortion of competition;
16. Stresses the need for people with disabilities to be able to benefit from social protection systems and poverty reduction programmes, disability-related assistance, public housing programmes and other enabling services, and retirement and benefit programmes;
17. Urges the Commission and the Member States to strengthen existing legislation in order to promote the inclusion of accessibility clauses in public contract-award procedures, including, contracts for transport facilities and buildings;
18. Calls on the Member States to guarantee full mobility for people with disabilities by:
 - (a) removing architectural barriers which prevent people with disabilities from moving about freely;
 - (b) incorporating dedicated transport services for people with disabilities into the public transport system;
 - (c) providing appropriate information and communication systems in stations and airports and at bus stops;
19. Highlights the role of voluntary work as a vital source of support for people with disabilities, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue and to improve the initiatives and support programmes devoted to such work;
20. Stresses the importance of research into new therapeutic methods which further facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into society; points out, in this regard, that drama and pet therapy, for instance, are proving to be effective in promoting socialisation and interpersonal communication;
21. Stresses the importance of the Member States adopting the EU directive on equal treatment of persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, and calls on the Member States to make this a priority and adopt it as soon as possible.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	24.5.2011
Result of final vote	+: 49 -: 0 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	János Áder, Elena Oana Antonescu, Kriton Arsenis, Sophie Auconie, Pilar Ayuso, Paolo Bartolozzi, Sergio Berlato, Nessa Childers, Chris Davies, Esther de Lange, Anne Delvaux, Bas Eickhout, Edite Estrela, Elisabetta Gardini, Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, Nick Griffin, Françoise Grossetête, Jolanta Emilia Hibner, Dan Jørgensen, Christa Kläß, Jo Leinen, Corinne Lepage, Kartika Tamara Liotard, Linda McAvan, Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė, Gilles Pargneaux, Andres Perello Rodriguez, Sirpa Pietikäinen, Mario Pirillo, Vittorio Prodi, Anna Rosbach, Oreste Rossi, Dagmar Roth-Behrendt, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Carl Schlyter, Horst Schnellhardt, Richard Seeber, Theodoros Skylakakis, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu, Salvatore Tatarella, Åsa Westlund, Sabine Wils, Marina Yannakoudakis
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Inés Ayala Sender, Matthias Groote, Riikka Manner, Marisa Matias, Judith A. Merkies, Michail Tremopoulos, Anna Záborská