

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0443/05
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to the Council

Subject: Architectural barriers and people with visual disabilities

It is almost an everyday occurrence to see works being carried out on pavements or in other public spaces or buildings without any kind of tactile indication at ground level to warn those with visual disabilities, nor are there relief maps in buildings indicating where places are.

The difficulties encountered by these people and the risks they run even in normal conditions when walking on pavements or crossing roads are thus aggravated by failure to respect fundamental and basic rules to ensure people's dignity and right to freedom of movement, especially for those who cannot do without such guarantees.

Article 26 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights ensures the protection of people with disabilities and their right to benefit from measures designed to ensure their independence, and hence freedom of movement.

In actual fact it is apparently assumed that rules on the elimination of architectural barriers have been observed if there are no steps or narrow doorways. In Italy a very advanced provision on the subject is in force, albeit not often observed – Article 1.2 (c) of Presidential Decree No 503 of 24 July 1996, according to which an architectural obstacle can include failure to provide information and indications to enable everyone, in particular the blind, the partially sighted and the deaf, to find their way around and identify places and sources of danger.

Is the Council aware of this situation? Can it say whether it intends to take steps to ensure that such provisions are adopted in the rest of Europe and, if so, how? In addition to this legislation in Italy, good design practices have been adopted in Hungary and Greece to ensure the autonomous mobility of the blind and partially sighted, by installing relief maps and tactile pathways, using the 'LOGES code' in airports, railway stations, etc.

Can the Council specify what it intends to do to disseminate these good practices throughout the rest of the European Union?