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*(Information)***COUNCIL****COUNCIL RESOLUTION****of 15 July 2003****on promoting the employment and social integration of people with disabilities**

(2003/C 175/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

(1) STRESSING that the European Union has a substantial number of people with disabilities who face a variety of difficulties in their daily lives and cannot always exercise their rights;

(2) NOTING that the Treaty establishing the European Community enables the Community to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;

(3) RECALLING in particular that acting on the basis of Article 13 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, which enables the Council to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, the Council adopted Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation ⁽¹⁾;

(4) RECALLING that Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights recognises the importance of combating every form of discrimination and Article 26 of that Charter states that the Union recognises and respects the right of persons with disabilities to benefit from measures designed to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the Community;

(5) CONSIDERING that the European Employment Strategy is a key instrument for underpinning the integration of people with disabilities into the mainstream labour market;

(6) TAKING ACCOUNT of the Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council of March 2000;

(7) RECALLING Council Decision 2001/903/EC of 3 December 2001 on the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003 ⁽²⁾;

(8) RECALLING the political declaration of Ministers responsible for Integration Policies for People with Disabilities (Malaga, 8 May 2003), which affirms that one of the main aims of the next decade is to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families;

(9) RECALLING also:

(a) the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 20 December 1996 on equality of opportunity for people with disabilities ⁽³⁾;

(b) the Commission Communication of 2000 entitled 'Towards a barrier-free Europe for people with disabilities';

(c) the European Parliament Resolution of 4 April 2001 on the said Commission communication 'Towards a barrier-free Europe for people with disabilities';

(d) the Council Resolution of 6 February 2003 on 'e-Accessibility' — improving the access of people with disabilities to the knowledge based society ⁽⁴⁾;

(e) the Council Resolution of 5 May 2003 on equal opportunities for pupils and students with disabilities in education and training ⁽⁵⁾;

(f) the Council Resolution of 6 May 2003 on accessibility of cultural infrastructure and cultural activities for people with disabilities ⁽⁶⁾;

⁽²⁾ OJ L 335, 19.12.2001, p. 15.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 12, 13.1.1997, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 39, 18.2.2003, p. 5.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 134, 7.6.2003, p. 6.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 134, 7.6.2003, p. 7.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.

- (10) BEARING IN MIND that people with disabilities still face a variety of barriers to full participation in society, often leading to social exclusion and poverty;
- (11) BEARING IN MIND the discussions of the informal Council meeting in Nafplion, on 23 and 24 January 2003, which emphasised the need for more extensive inclusion of disability issues in employment and social protection policies;
- (12) NOTING the process related to the preparation of a United Nations legally binding instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and the EU contribution thereto (May 2003) and taking note of the Commission communication entitled 'Towards a United Nations legally binding instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities' (January 2003),

CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THEIR RESPECTIVE POWERS, TO:

- (i) promote greater cooperation with all bodies concerned with people with disabilities at national and European level, including civil society;
- (ii) promote the full integration and participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society, recognising that they have equal rights with other citizens;
- (iii) continue efforts to remove barriers to the integration and participation of people with disabilities in the labour market, by enforcing equal treatment measures and improving integration and participation at all levels of the educational and training system;
- (iv) pursue efforts to make lifelong learning more accessible to people with disabilities and, within this context, give particular attention to the barrier-free use of new information and communication technologies and the Internet to improve the quality of learning, vocational training and access to employment;
- (v) remove barriers impeding the participation of people with disabilities in social life and, in particular, in working life, and prevent the setting up of new barriers through the promotion of design for all;

- (vi) ensure the transposition and implementation of the Directive on establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation before the deadlines agreed;
- (vii) reflect on the need for further measures to promote the employment and social integration of people with disabilities into society;
- (viii) consider the possibility of taking measures at national and European level, consistent with the objectives of the European Employment Strategy, to promote the employment of people with disabilities;
- (ix) mainstream disability issues when drafting future national action plans relating to social exclusion and poverty;
- (x) continue the exchange of information and experience at European level with regard to these issues, with the participation, as appropriate, of the European bodies and networks with relevant experience in this area;
- (xi) collect statistical material on the situation of people with disabilities, paying particular attention to gender specific data, including on the development of services and benefits for this group;
- (xii) support the work of the EU Group of High Level Officials on Disability Questions;
- (xiii) reinforce the mainstreaming of the disability perspective into all relevant policies at the stages of policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- xiv) pay due attention to issues of concern to women with disabilities when adopting, designing and evaluating policies for people with disabilities so as to secure equal treatment for women.

ENCOURAGES THE SOCIAL PARTNERS:

- (xv) in the spirit of their Declaration of 20 January 2003 entitled 'Promoting equal opportunities and access to employment for people with disabilities' to promote the integration of people with disabilities, in particular on the mainstream labour market, through their actions and their collective agreements at all the relevant levels of social dialogue.