

Press Release

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Groundbreaking 10-year action plan for people with disabilities: all 46 Council of Europe member states to participate

Strasbourg, 24.04.2007 – For the first time ever, all 46 Council of Europe member states are expected to outline specific government policy to better integrate into society Europe's estimated 100 million people with disabilities.

The European Co-ordination Forum for the Council of Europe's *Disability Action Plan 2006-2015* will gather senior officials from every member state and representatives of international disability NGOs in Strasbourg from 26-27 April – just several months after the action plan was officially launched.

Forum delegations will propose new policies based on guidelines charted in the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015, aimed at giving people with disabilities a greater say in decisions affecting them and providing needed opportunities for a better quality of life. Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis will also address forum participants.

Among measures member states are expected to introduce:

- Barrier free access to information and communication technology
- Accessible public transport
- Equal access to education
- Vocational training to assure employment
- Assuring active participation in political and public life
- Home-based rehabilitation, linked with community-based services
- Equal access to quality health care services
- Access to legal protection on the same basis as other citizens
- Safeguards against all forms of abuse and violence

Until now, a "partial agreement" with a limited number of member states guided Council of Europe disability policy. Forum organisers say a shift from a "medical model" of disability to a "social and human rights-based model" has resulted in setting up this long-term intergovernmental co-operation platform on disability for all 46 Council of Europe member states. The forum will also set off a follow-up process to assure the best coordination of actions taken by individual state governments.

The Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 could also become a policy tool to assist member states to put into practice in Europe the recently adopted United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

[Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015](#)

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