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REPORT BY THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
AND THE COUNCIL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS
OF THE HELIOS PROGRAMME (1988- 1991) *

* Article 8 (2) of Council Decision 88/231/EEC of 18 April 1988, establishing a second Community action programme for disabled people (HELIOS). OJ L 104 of 18 April 1988, p. 38

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1 - OBJECTIVES OF THE HELIOS PROGRAMME AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

The second Community action programme for disabled people (HELIOS) was adopted under Council Decision 88/231/EEC of 18 April 1988 to cover the period 1 January 1988 to 31 December 1991⁽¹⁾. In accordance with Article 8 (1) of the Decision, the Commission has submitted an initial interim report and summary to the European Parliament and the Council covering the period 1 January 1988 to 30 June 1990, on the basis of an assessment of activities conducted by programme participants⁽²⁾. Article 8 also calls for a complete report on the implementation and results of the programme to be submitted before 1 July 1992.

The objectives of the HELIOS programme were:

- to develop, in the fields of vocational training and rehabilitation, economic integration, social integration and an independent way of life for disabled people, a Community approach based on the best innovatory experience in the Member States;
- to encourage technical cooperation at Community level, by means of exchange and information activities;
- to contribute to the implementation of recommendation 86/379/EEC on the employment of disabled persons in the Community⁽³⁾ and the resolution of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 21 December 1981, concerning the social integration of disabled persons⁽⁴⁾;
- to enhance participation by handicapped persons and their organisations at Community level;
- to give particular attention to disabled women and those caring for disabled children or adults at home.

In order to achieve these objectives, technical cooperation has been developed at Community level by general or specific activities supplemented by information and documentation, particularly using the computerised information system known as HANDYNET.

Moreover, the Commission has taken a set of measures to promote a comprehensive Community policy⁽⁵⁾ on behalf of the disabled, as well as launching other Community programmes, activities or initiatives which take into account the needs of the disabled, and establishing cooperation with international organisations. Finally, the structures established at Community level have ensured the implementation of the programme and the development of new approaches.

The aim of this report is to make a qualitative assessment of the results achieved. It is also a source of information for the implementation of the next Community action programme for the disabled. A report summarising the conclusions reached at the seminars and conferences organised by the networks under the HELIOS programme is available from the Commission of the European Communities⁽⁶⁾.

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- (1) Council Decision 88/231/EEC of 18 April 1988 establishing a second Community action programme for disabled people (HELIOS), OJ L 104 of 23 April 1988, p. 38
 - (2) Interim report by the Commission on the implementation and results of the HELIOS programme promoting economic and social integration of disabled people in the European Community (period 1.1.1988 - 30.6.1990), Brussels, 25 February 1991, SEC (91) 299 final.
 - (3) OJ L 225 of 12 August 1986, p. 43.
 - (4) OJ C. 347 of 31 December 1981, p. 1
 - (5) In accordance with the consensus achieved within the Social Affairs Council of the European Communities on 29 September 1989.
 - (6) Cf. the Commission document "Conclusions of conferences and seminars organised by the Community networks under the HELIOS programme (Commission of the European Communities)"

2 - TECHNICAL COOPERATION AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

2.1. General activities

2.1.1. Exchanges of information and experience

a) Developments

In accordance with the Decision establishing the HELIOS programme⁽⁷⁾, the aim of technical cooperation is to "develop a Community approach based on the best innovatory experience in the Member States". The twelfth consideration of the Decision setting up the HELIOS programme states that "the present programme is designed to complement action taken at national level, in particular by ensuring coordination of these actions and exchanges of experience gleaned from them". Moreover, in accordance with the thirteenth consideration of this Decision, "the main responsibility for the social integration and independent way of life of handicapped persons lies with the Member States but cooperation action at Community level may help Member States to improve the effectiveness of the measures which they take in this area".

Exchanges of information and experience have involved many different aspects of the rehabilitation and integration of the disabled. These have been to the benefit of all participants in the HELIOS programme and of the persons involved in the twelve Member States: organisations run by or for disabled persons, national, regional or local authorities, professional individuals and institutions involved in rehabilitation and integration, together with the two sides of industry.

Exchanges of information and experience have primarily been conducted within a network of 50 vocational training or rehabilitation centres and experiments, three Local Model Activity (LMA) networks and Europe-wide organisations for the disabled. The members of these networks were nominated by the Commission during the autumn of 1988 after being proposed by the Member States. As far as possible, these nominations reflected the need for balanced geographical distribution and adequate representation of the various categories of handicaps and activities. With regard to the Europe-wide organisations for the disabled, their role was to represent disabled persons and their national organisations at European level. They comprised national or international organisations representing the disabled. Moreover, development of the HANDYNET system's network of information-collection centres has boosted the scope for information exchange.

The initial objective of technical cooperation within the LMA network was to mobilise all local resources involved in the process of rehabilitation and integration of handicapped persons, with the support of local coordination committees. This cooperation was also intended to develop innovative practices in the form of models which could be transferred to a wide range of legislative and administrative contexts. Against this background, active participation by network members and of disabled-persons' organisations in conferences, seminars, study visits and training sessions contributed to enhancing the frequency and quality of information and experience exchange. The main purpose of annual conferences was to bring together the members of the network concerned and some external partners in order to promote European cohesion in the development of techniques and priority aspects of the rehabilitation or integration of the disabled. Thematic seminars brought the LMAs into contact with centres and projects particularly involved with or interested by a specific theme. Study visits made it possible for members of a network to see how effective institutions and successful projects operated, with a view to employing similar techniques in another Member State. Within the LMAs, sets of study visits paved the way for thematic seminars after the second year. Finally, training sessions reserved for members of the network of vocational training and rehabilitation centres and projects have encouraged the study and learning of particularly effective techniques and methods of vocational training and rehabilitation.

(7) OJ L 104 of 23 April 1988, page 38, Article 3a).

b) Difficulties

The delayed adoption of the HELIOS programme on 18 April 1988, with effect retroactively from 1 January, engendered initial difficulties in setting up networks and activities. The Member States had very little time to designate network participants and the earliest activities did not really get underway until the end of the year with the seminar for project leaders for the three Local Model Activity networks (Brussels, Belgium, 9-10 November 1988) and the constitutive plenary conference of the network of vocational training and rehabilitation centres and projects (Verona, Italy, 19-20 December 1988). Work on the programme for European cooperation in the school integration of the disabled (14 May 1987) had to be postponed, given that the budget was not approved until April 1988.

Information and experience exchanges, which to a major degree took national structures and schemes into account, were designed to enhance coordination and interaction in comparison to the earlier Community action programme⁽⁸⁾.

After obtaining the opinion of the Advisory Committee, the Commission put forward participation criteria which certain network members were not able to meet because they lacked the physical or financial resources and in some cases certain skills (technical, linguistic) or the requisite dynamism or commitment to Europe. There was very wide variation in the extent of participation. Similarly, the diverse nature of the participating institutions did not always lend itself to a homogenous level of cooperation and participation in that their status and human or financial resources restricted their freedom of action. Accordingly, a vital role was played by the participants' own ability to contribute, given that the Commission was not always in a position to fund certain network activities. The budget allocations for exchange activities were generally regarded as inadequate in the light of the communication and coordination expenses incurred by the programme at all levels.

Operating difficulties seem to have overshadowed technical and basic exchanges. Technical cooperation required major organisational efforts by the experts assisting the Commission, sometimes at the expense of basic developments, transfer and dissemination. Moreover, certain Local Model Activities, set up in order to participate in the HELIOS programme, found it difficult to carry out activities throughout the programme. The irregular nature of these activities led to problems of monitoring and continuity in the work undertaken. Finally, the annual themes were not always scrupulously respected.

Activities under the HELIOS programme, were moreover intended to establish a true partnership between Local Model Activities, vocational training or rehabilitation centres and disabled-persons' organisations at regional, national or Community level. In fact, these organisations were not in all cases invited to the seminars and in general they were called upon only to a limited degree by those persons and organisations involved in rehabilitation or in the integration of the disabled in their locality or region. Inadequate local cooperation was in some cases found in an exaggerated form at national level as a result of insufficient coordination, or even contact, between centres, Local Model Activities and the disabled-persons' organisations within certain Member States.

Finally, given that Member States are responsible for implementing social policy, the HELIOS programme could not force the implementation of specific action in the Member States. Moreover, it is difficult to assess the impact at Community level of certain activities under the HELIOS programme. Their major contribution has been to improve the knowledge and conceptual understanding of the professionals and persons involved in the Member States. Their innovative nature has set them apart from the activities carried out within each Member State and as a result it is difficult to assess them on the basis of national criteria without taking account of their transferability, compatibility and their links with national or local priorities.

(8) The first action programme (1983-1987) established in accordance with Council Resolution of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 December 1981 on the social integration of handicapped people. OJ C 347 of 31 December 1981, page 1.

c) Positive Community Influence

Activities under the HELIOS programme have been very diverse, reflecting a similar variation in initial situations, fields of action, objectives, methodologies and resources. In some cases they preceded, in others followed, the adoption of reforms within the Member States.

The positive contribution made by information and experience exchange is reflected in content development, wider dissemination and the encouragement of rehabilitation and integration practices and policies for the disabled. In particular, the success of such exchanges is apparent from the broadening of the field of action (aspects, target groups), modification of the methods used (cooperation between government and private institutions, involvement by the authorities), the establishment of transnational projects (personnel training, leisure or media) and the introduction of new approaches and specific activities.

Certain specific working parties have been established as part of Community technical cooperation, comprising not only a forum for exchanges but also a planning tool for the relevant ministries, authorities and private bodies involved. Moreover, these exchanges have enriched the experience and know-how of organisations representing the disabled through their participation in debates to put forward their policies.

Activities under the HELIOS programme have encouraged initiatives, extended scope for action, enabled participants to establish professional links and to make themselves known and provided further ways of making the public aware of the interests and situation of the disabled at local, regional and national level. Public opinion has become aware of specific or previously-ignored aspects of the integration of the disabled and it has proved possible to identify priority action fields.

Exchanges of information and experience have also made people more aware of a number of national realities: concepts of integration or exclusion phenomena, alternatives to institutionalisation, decentralisation of services, differentiation of approach to reflect the needs of the person, involvement of the disabled person in decision-making, and strengthening of the partnership between administrators, rehabilitation professionals and the disabled and their families. Attention has been drawn to the situation of the disabled in the new German Länder, in order to achieve a situation more closely resembling that in the other regions of the Community. It was against this background that the fourth plenary conference of the network of vocational training and rehabilitation centres and projects was organised on 18 and 20 November 1991 at Erfurt/Weimar in the former East Germany, in cooperation with the new training centre at Seelingstädt (Thüringen). The primary aim of this conference was to make the new German Länder aware of the Commission's activities on behalf of the disabled. Contacts between the new Länder and the Member States were also encouraged by exchange and technical cooperation activities. Finally, Mr Jagoda, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Bonn was invited to the meeting of the Advisory Committee on 30 October 1990 to describe the social situation in the eastern part of Germany.

Information and experience exchanges have also intensified bilateral contacts between national authorities and encouraged the promotion of policy initiatives. For example, the Resolution of 31 May 1990 on the integration in ordinary educational systems of children and young persons with disabilities was the result of an initiative by the Irish Presidency in the light of the conclusions of the Conference on Education and Handicap (held in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in October 1989).

d) Experience transfer and information dissemination

Experience transfer and information dissemination are key elements of the HELIOS programme which require a greater role in terms of training and expertise to be played by the most advanced institutions in the Member States. Nevertheless, it is difficult to measure the scale of exchanges, improvements made and the transferability of technical and teaching methods. Many programme participants are content with merely disseminating information locally and organising a seminar focusing on a presentation of the HELIOS programme, rather than satisfactorily disseminating the information and results at national level. Moreover, there is a need for a clear statement of tasks at national level.

A range of conclusions from conferences and seminars organised by the networks have enabled the Commission to draw up a summary report which makes a positive contribution to experience transfer and information dissemination.

The transferability of experiments conducted within Community networks highlights the difficulties associated with work to integrate the disabled. Ideas generated by activities under the HELIOS programme are not always immediately applicable because of inappropriate legislation and budgetary limitations. Some of the shortcomings observed arise from a lack of national coordination or a shortage of resources. Some exchanges have also proved unsatisfactory because of linguistic difficulties experienced by the participants.

The external network, which underwent particular development within the centres network, comprised the relevant institutions and disabled-persons' organisations with the same objectives as programme participants. It offers scope for increasing the number of dialogue partners and expanding information exchange to all sectors of integration within each Member State, thus heightening the impact of the HELIOS programme. This external network has enabled better representation of the interests and categories of the disabled, despite the fact that its role was reduced through the absence of a precise definition and the necessary financial resources for its operation.

e) Conclusions, future prospects

Actual interaction between the Community networks, institutions within the external network and disabled-persons organisations must be strengthened, particularly through their joint participation in seminars and thematic working parties associated with an integration field. The will to extend exchange activities and their impact to include the institutions of the external network has been hampered by limited resources in terms of finance and professional time, to the detriment of widespread dissemination of information and experience transfer. In general, participants must be given appropriate financial resources and greater flexibility in taking leave to attend. A need has also become apparent for greater participation by disabled persons and their organisations in seminars and conferences organised by the Community networks.

National objectives and the themes of Community activities could be made to complement each other. Similarly, the Commission favours continuous evaluation in close cooperation with national authorities, so that projects can be replaced where they have yielded insufficient results or are of too little relevance to the Community as a whole. Subdividing the themes would allow in-depth treatment of specific aspects of precisely-defined priority themes. These themes should be studied by decentralised and truly innovative and interactive bodies within one or more networks.

Finally, it would appear necessary to encourage study visits and training sessions, given their usefulness for professional technical cooperation. The effectiveness of exchanges of information and experience is a function of the number of participants and projects, the available budget, the continuity of Community action and the method adopted, particularly the thematic approach.

In order for Community action on behalf of the disabled to be coherent and comprehensive, new fields must be taken into account such as prevention, the promotion of research into handicaps, coordination with health-promotion programmes, other levels of education and access to work, the physical environment and communication. However, enlarging the application field would increase the number of priorities and of persons to be consulted. In this context, the Commission could consider establishing new participation criteria for the members of Community networks and for disabled-persons organisations, thus ensuring that they are more representative at European level (disablement categories, European dimension, rehabilitation and integration fields, democratic operation, number of members).

A solution for all dissemination and transfers could in the future be provided by HANYDNET's on-line newsletter and electronic mail. Active participation by network members and disabled-persons' organisations in the editorial content of the HELIOS magazine should ensure that this becomes a true information and experience vehicle for the various categories of persons involved in the integration of the disabled. It would also be an appropriate way of enhancing transfer, information and cooperation with other Community programmes, initiatives or activities of relevance to the disabled.

2.1.2. Coordination of activities at local and national level

a) Developments

One of the objectives of the HELIOS programme was to enhance coordination work and to exploit innovative schemes in the Member States in the field of technical cooperation by improving their interaction and coordination. Taking into account the Member States' responsibility for the social integration of the disabled, the Commission has accordingly proposed and encouraged the creation of financial and other resources at local and national level. Certain Member States have responded positively to the Commission's proposal by creating coordination structures for the activities of the HELIOS programme (Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom). The Commission has been invited to attend coordination meetings organised in certain Member States.

In order to promote a comprehensive and coherent policy on behalf of the disabled at Community level, information meetings have also been organised by the Commission to brief the competent ministries. The primary aim was to provide a mutual flow of information on activities undertaken at national and Community level.

At the same time, the Commission has encouraged coordination between the relevant ministries in the Member States and the members of Community networks concerning Community technical-cooperation activities. The need to create national cooperation structures was all the more apparent in that a certain number of network members (particularly within the school integration network) belonged to the public sector and their major aim was to coordinate the activities of existing services in this field and to create new ones. By February 1989, eight Member States had already established a management/coordination committee or had assigned this task to the competent national body for the disabled⁽⁹⁾. National delegations to consultative bodies and working parties have also played an information and coordination role with regard to their national coordination structure or the network members in their Member State. Their mandate was in fact to disseminate the information obtained at national level under the HELIOS programme. Consultative bodies and working parties have also been regularly informed about the activities under the HELIOS programme and in other fields at Community level (scientific research, transport, etc.). In general, the Member States have been overwhelmingly in favour of the activities of the HELIOS programme as can be seen from the small number of critical opinions to be found in the minutes of Advisory Committee meetings.

(9) Minutes of the third meeting of the Liaison Group - Brussels, 21 February 1989

The obligation to set up a local coordinating committee had been proposed by the Commission as a prerequisite for participation in the LMA networks and the Commission had even provided financial aid in the case of the LMAs in the social integration network. The aim of this structure was to inform the various categories of competent institutions and individuals and to establish effective cooperation with these partners at local level. Moreover, the LMAs have been aided by local consultative technical committees responsible for providing technical aid, enhancing the awareness of the public and ensuring local dissemination of the experience gained. In the view of the LMAs, these committees should represent associations of disabled persons or their parents, government inspectors or senior administrators, teachers' unions, health-care workers, psychologists and social workers from the establishments involved.

Disabled-persons' organisations at European level have been invited to seek information about the scope for local disabled-persons' organisations to participate in local coordination committees. A questionnaire concerning cooperation between disabled-persons' organisations belonging to the Liaison Group and members of the LMA networks revealed that 35 out of a total of 80 did carry out such coordination. Finally, disabled-persons' organisations belonging to the Liaison Group and the Dialogue Group have played a coordinating and expert role at local, national and European level. They have established regular contacts with the national associations representing their disablement category or field of integration and have disseminated information and experience within the Member States.

b) Difficulties

With the exception of certain local authorities, the authorities in some Member States have shown little interest in the activities of the HELIOS programme. Moreover, a shortage of resources has sometimes coincided with a lack of national coordination in the field of integrating the disabled. Inadequate funding and failure to organise meetings at national level has led to members of a Community network within a given Member State having too little contact with one another or even not being aware of each other's potential. In addition, the absence of a coherent policy for the integration of the disabled in certain Member States has hampered the launching or development of certain initiatives.

With regard to the local or regional context of technical cooperation activities, the difficulties most frequently encountered by programme participants have resulted from the following factors:

- hostility or indifference to change (particularly as regards the mentality of certain employers or placement services);
- inappropriate administrative or legal structures;
- a rigid hierarchy and organisation of partner services;
- power struggles and the precarious situation of certain institutions;
- a difficult economic climate.

Finally, disabled-persons' organisations find it difficult to come into contact with certain network members. Barely half of Local Model Activities have called on disabled-persons' organisations to participate in this work and have accordingly taken too little account of the interests and opinions of those representing the disabled. Moreover, disabled-persons' organisations have not always been invited to the various seminars or have not always been able to provide close and effective cooperation. Certain European organisations for the disabled have not taken sufficient action to create structures to inform the national associations for their disablement category or integration field.

c) Positive Community Influence

The HELIOS programme has extended the scope for information exchange and direct contact as well as contributing to a better understanding of social policy and the solutions worked out in each Member State.

Coordination at local and national level has enabled a better understanding of the actual working conditions encountered by professionals in the field and made it possible to direct, stimulate and develop the work of programme participants. In some cases it has also permitted better relations between those involved in the rehabilitation and integration of the disabled, particularly between rehabilitation and vocational training centres, the LMAs and disabled-persons' organisations at local, national or European level.

Despite significant variation in the aid accorded by national or regional authorities (occasional or systematic aid), there has been enhanced cooperation between public and private bodies in a number of fields concerning the integration of the disabled, particularly with regard to various aspects of independent living.

Information dissemination among disabled-persons' organisations has been improved to the benefit of the disabled. In this context, the Commission has welcomed the creation by national organisations representing the disabled of structures at European level which aid the coordination of activities under the HELIOS programme. Very specific associations have been created, such as the EUCREA association (10), the European Union of Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Organisations, the European Brain-injury Society and the European Multiple-Sclerosis Alliance. Finally, disabled-persons' organisations have been able to give their opinions, based on an annual activity programme, on the priorities to be addressed in seminars, conferences, study visits and other activities concerning their disability category or integration field.

The coordination structures encouraged and stimulated by the Commission have made it possible to evaluate participation in the HELIOS programme. They have also led to a better understanding of the situation of the disabled in the Member States by providing more uniform information and greater interaction.

d) Experience transfer and information dissemination

The Commission has aided the Member States by facilitating dissemination at national level through the holding of annual meetings for all HELIOS partner organisations.

Existing coordination structures at national level have assisted the centralisation, evaluation and appraisal of project results and supplied the necessary information and technical assistance, particularly for the organisation of seminars and conferences. Similarly, certain services representing the competent ministries and particular authorities at regional and local level have managed to enhance the operational environment for participants in the HELIOS programme, particularly in terms of conferences at Cagliari (I), Hannover (D), Valladolid (E) and Patras (GR). In addition, some initiatives launched at local level have had consequences at national level. An educational plan has thus been drawn up in several Member States following an evaluation of requirements in the field of school integration.

Local coordinating committees have provided a forum at which disabled-persons organisations can present their policy, give a direct account of their experience and defend the interests of the disabled. A great variety of disability categories have been catered for in all Member States and it has proved possible to enhance and expand knowledge of effective rehabilitation and integration practices.

(10) The European association EURCREA has the role of promoting the creative talents of the disabled

e) **Conclusions, future prospects**

Coordination of activities on behalf of the disabled predominantly took place in the later years of the HELIOS programme. Incidentally, more funding should be made available to allow dissemination of information and coordination of activities at local and national level. In this context, the Member States should hold regular information meetings at national level, while Europe-wide organisations for the disabled should be given greater responsibility for coordinating information dissemination. Finally, it would be advisable to assist coordination at Community level in order to encourage network partners to cooperate more closely with the various Community programmes, so as to ensure maximum possible participation by disabled persons. Some participants have concluded cooperation agreements as a result of the HELIOS programme and the Community's HORIZON initiative.

The HANDYNET system for information transfer offers all levels of institutions involved in the HELIOS programme great scope for exchanges and communication. Finally, adoption of a more thematic approach and more precise allocation of objectives and tasks would aid coordination of activities and the overall effectiveness of the HELIOS programme.

The work of participants in the various Community programmes on behalf of the disabled should be followed up. This would lead to better evaluation of their impact on national situations and legislation and enhance the effectiveness of coordination at national level. More stringent obligations and participation criteria should be required of network members and disabled persons' organisations in terms of information about their activities and dissemination at local and national level. In this context, greater success in promoting the integration of the disabled could be achieved by an independent structure continuously monitoring participants. In addition, this evaluation structure could assist analysis and the practical implementation of the next Community programme, particularly with regard to determining annual themes.

2.2. Specific activities

2.2.1. Network of vocational training and rehabilitation centres and projects

The network of vocational training and rehabilitation centres and projects comprises establishments or groups of establishments in the field of re-education which adopt a multi-disciplinary approach (using full-time specialists) to the continuous process of rehabilitation. These establishments have been designated by the Member States and have the objective of stimulating the development of training and vocational rehabilitation measures for the disabled. Against this background, the 50 members of this network have laid particular stress on using new technologies and on encouraging disabled persons to play an active role in their own rehabilitation in order to overcome the effects of the widespread stiffening of competition on the labour market.

The delay in adopting the HELIOS programme meant that the definitive composition of the network of centres was not known until October 1988. Initial contacts were then made at the meeting on 19-20 December 1988 at Verona (1) but the network's activities did not really commence until the beginning of 1989. Compared to the earlier network under the first Community programme for the disabled, the network of centres and projects was restructured and expanded with the aim of ensuring it was both more diversified and more representative of the various disability categories. This meant that 23 new members joined the 27 centres from the earlier network. While the majority of the latter were involved in the vocational training of persons suffering from a physical or mental disability, the new participants represented specialised institutions such as psychiatric hospitals or institutes for the (partially) blind or deaf.

This network's activities comprised annual conferences, thematic seminars, study visits and training sessions.

a) Developments

Despite the diversity of rehabilitation systems in the Member States, Community technical cooperation has shown that they share similar objectives and has made it possible to compare the various approaches. Technical cooperation took the form of five conferences, 12 thematic seminars, 140 study visits by network members to their partners, 94 organised study visits and 27 organised training sessions over the 1988-1991 period. The number of study visits per centre, either as organiser or as guest, varied from none to sixteen between January 1989 and December 1991.

The most active of the initial participants were those rehabilitation centres with European experience, which aided the spontaneous development of exchanges. Other network members required between several months and more than a year to adapt their activities to European requirements and to participate fully. Other than prior international experience, other factors influencing the level of participation were the availability of funding and professional time, the need to find matching partners within the network, and communication skills. The Commission and the external experts assisting it did, however, give considerable aid to the participating centres and projects, helping them to channel and organise their activities and making it easier to reply to exchange requests from other network members and to discuss problems they had in common. In certain Member States, however, official or institutional responsibilities and the private or public status of some centres limit their capacity to take decisions, to adopt a European approach to training or rehabilitation and even to acquire new equipment.

Given these various factors, there were very major differences in levels of participation throughout the HELIOS programme. Some centres attended very few conferences or seminars and did not carry out a single study visit or training session. With regard to the seminars, one should particularly emphasise the participation by such centres as Dublin (IRL), Gent (B), Cordoba (E) and Capellen (L). The specialisation of certain centres in terms of the target group or the integration field they cover to some degree explains their limited participation in thematic seminars. With regard to the study visits, attention should be drawn to the dynamic and significant participation by Portuguese, British, Dutch, Luxembourgish and Irish centres. The centres and projects of Porto, Sintra and Lisbon (P), Thessaloniki (GR), Valencia (E), Worms (D), Pengwern Hall, Birmingham and Edinburgh (UK), were distinguished by their high number of study visits. For their part, the Portuguese, Irish and Greek centres distinguished themselves in the field of training sessions. At the other end of the scale, one should note the poor participation in study visits by French, Belgian and Danish centres and by Danish, German, Spanish and French centres in the case of training sessions.

Network participants proposed themes (particularly for seminars) which often reflected the development of, and initiatives by, disabled-persons' organisations. The choice of activity themes was generally in accordance with the objectives of the HELIOS programme, the current situation in national rehabilitation sectors and the requirements or suggestions of network centres, external partners and disabled-persons' organisations. Approximately half of the network's thematic seminars were devoted to types of training and vocational integration of persons with a mental handicap or mental illness.

Given their very different competences, the centres were able only gradually to extend their responsibilities and their awareness of their capacities and resources. Until 1991, seminars did not benefit from working parties or preparation (Joint study visits). The past two years have seen a significant increase in activity requests which the HELIOS programme has had to turn down because of a lack of resources. Priorities have accordingly had to be based on the needs of centres, their personnel and the target groups of disabled people.

Finally, the establishment and operation of an external network, regarded as vital for the dissemination and strengthening of technical cooperation, has experienced difficulties arising from inadequate contact between the centres of certain Member States and a shortage of funding to organise national meetings. Nevertheless, the members of the external network have shown great interest in the activities of the HELIOS programme, even if they did not in principle qualify for funding to participate in them.

b) Difficulties

Various shortcomings have hampered or occasionally prevented the network of training and vocational rehabilitation centres and projects from carrying out and immediately expanding technical cooperation exchanges:

- inadequate knowledge of other participants and shortage of experience at international level;
- inadequate knowledge of fields other than their own speciality;
- linguistic shortcomings;
- absence of support, coordination and contact on the part of certain competent authorities at national level, some of whom demonstrated little interest in the activities of the HELIOS programme.

In terms of the structure of their own organisation, moreover, the centres could not generally devote sufficient time to maintaining intensive contact within the HELIOS programme or to close cooperation with other centres. In addition, the available budget did not allow the entire network to participate each year and was a major limitation on the scope for inviting LMAs to network seminars (out of a total of 25 participants, only 3 could be invited). On average, one study visit per year could be financed for half the centres. This group of factors made it difficult to carry out work in depth (undertaken mainly during seminars) and to solve all the organisational problems. To be effective, this (specialists') network's activities also had to change attitudes to disability on the part of professionals, families and the public in general. Moreover, the rehabilitation and integration process can only be successful if disabled people themselves actively participate in the activities and decision making.

c) Positive Community Influence

Participation in the HELIOS programme's network of centres and projects has resulted in extensive information exchange and direct contact, together with a better understanding of the social policies, solutions and rehabilitation systems developed in each Member State and at Community level. Network activities enabled centres to:

- obtain a better understanding of available techniques (new equipment, software, teaching methods, etc.)⁽¹¹⁾;
- inform others of innovative projects;
- evaluate the centre's own activities and adapt these to economic realities;
- expand the centre's scope for work or its application field;
- enhance the cohesion, resources and dynamism of centres and establish joint projects despite financial, legislative, bureaucratic or staffing constraints;
- make certain regional authorities aware of the need to cooperate in the field of rehabilitation and vocational integration.

(11) Thematic seminars in Copenhagen, Worms and Capellen

Community activities have frequently had a stimulating effect and encouraged the institutions and individuals engaged in rehabilitation to reassess their work. Representatives of centres have been invited to other Member States so that both parties could demonstrate their working methods. These interactions and influences have had a concrete and wide-ranging impact on know-how in the field. The aim of training sessions is primarily the transfer of practical skills and the direct application of the knowledge obtained from another centre. Some centres have discovered that they had ideas or projects in common, while the more advanced centres have been able to let others benefit from their expertise.

Greater interest in training and working with persons suffering from a psychological disorder also became apparent. Some centres not previously involved with this category of the disabled have also taken measures to help them as a result of contacts made within the HELIOS programme. Finally, thanks to the programme it proved possible to improve relations between some rehabilitation centres and certain local disabled-persons' organisations.

d) Experience transfer and information dissemination

Experience transfer and information dissemination have resulted not only from network activities but also from activities within the centres or at national level or through Community programmes. Worthy of note is the initiative by the Pengwern Hall (UK) centre, which has established a computerised network for inter-centre communication. The information requests concerned documentation, projects, ideas, concepts or equipment which certain centres were able to adopt after minor changes. Apart from the Pengwern Hall centre, such model centres as those at Groesbeek and Rotterdam (NL), Sahva (DK), Cork (IRL), Worms and Bonn (D) were visited particularly frequently and have acted as a driving force through their projects. It is however difficult to assess the extent to which the centres' success has extended to other Member States where the legislative, economic, social and cultural context does not always allow the duplication of other activities.

The fields most involved in the transfer of know-how and experience were new technologies, vocational rehabilitation of persons suffering from a psychological disorder, the training and placement of persons with a mental handicap, vocational training and communication methods for the deaf and the creation of new kinds of work for the blind.

e) Conclusions, future prospects

Permanent links have been established and maintained between certain network centres and institutions forming part of the external network beyond the HELIOS programme. This cooperation may be bilateral or multilateral, continuing or arising from the HORIZON initiative, for which a number of transnational projects by network members have been approved.

The activities and instruction carried out under the HELIOS programme have led to new developments in certain centres, such as cooperation with industry in the fields of vocational training, work experience and placement.

Activities undertaken by a number of network centres have demonstrated shortcomings or inadequacies of some national legislations in the field of the vocational integration of the disabled. In some cases, these aspects have been brought to the attention of national authorities and could subsequently give rise to new economic, legal or social provisions.

At the present time, certain approaches and trends can be identified.

- More activities tend to be devoted to those suffering from mental illness, such persons being integrated into normal vocational training institutes.
- An increasing number of schemes involve supported employment.
- There are moves to blur the divisions between categories of the disabled in the field of training and vocational rehabilitation, alongside more effective use of financial resources and technical know-how.

- In accordance with the wishes expressed by the political leaders of certain Member States, a growing number of training and vocational rehabilitation centres are likely to become part of the private sector.
- Training and vocational rehabilitation institutions tend to adapt more smoothly to changing work patterns and technological progress.

2.2.2 Local model activities networks

Nominated by the Commission in the autumn of 1988 on the basis of proposals by the Member States, the 80 local model activities formed three networks to promote school integration (LMA I), training, vocational rehabilitation and economic integration (LMA II) and social integration and autonomous living for the disabled (LMA III) respectively.

The annual themes put forward for the various activities organised by these networks were discussed at the seminar bringing together the project leaders of the LMA networks (Brussels, Belgium, 9-10 November 1988). The following themes were involved:

- for the school-integration network: special systems and situations concerning integrated education, apprenticeships (1989), training of teachers, parents and the integration process (1990), a full scholastic life, elimination of physical barriers and modification of transport (1991);
- for the economic-integration network: evaluation, orientation and guidance (1989), pre-employment preparation (1990), employment (1991);
- for the social-integration network: accommodation and assistance in daily life (1989), mobility and transport (1990) and access to public buildings (1991).

During the HELIOS programme, persons involved in the LMA networks studied local approaches to integrating the disabled. They contributed to developing information exchanges and know-how transfer through their participation in three seminars for each LMA network, three conferences for LMA I and II and two conferences for LMA III. In addition, they organised a total of 273 study visits spread over the three networks and carried out 556 visits to their partners.

2.2.2.1 Local model activities I - school integration (LMA I)

a) Developments

The objective of the school-integration network (LMA I) was to ensure "close coordination with the European cooperation programme on the integration of handicapped children into ordinary schools", set out in Article 4e) of the Council Decision of 18 April 1988 establishing the HELIOS programme.

An overview of all LMAs in the network reveals a considerable disparity in size, field of action and the group involved.

- 3 were formed within an education centre, 10 others were locally based and 8 could be regarded as national, departmental or regional services.
- The 21 LMAs have primarily tackled school integration at primary and secondary level. The LMAs of Leuven (B) and Luxembourg (L) were noteworthy for their project for the transition to higher education of persons suffering from a sensory handicap.
- With the exception of the LMAs of Luxembourg (L), Lisbon (P) and Ile de France (F), which focused on a specific school population (respectively visual handicaps, auditory handicaps, pupils with severe developmental and autistic difficulties), the majority of LMAs worked with pupils presenting the full range of handicaps.

Since the role of the Districts under the previous Community action programme for the disabled was limited to socio-economic integration⁽¹²⁾, the LMAs in the school-integration network were all established in 1988 and only gradually accumulated experience at Community level. Moreover, poor understanding of educational systems, both specialised and ordinary, in the various Member States and some initial difficulty in understanding the objectives to be achieved or the strategies to be drawn up helped delay a dynamic launch of the network. It was some 18 months before the network was fully effective.

Technical cooperation within the network took the form of three seminars, three conferences, 67 organised visits and 156 study visits carried out by the network LMAs to their partners between December 1988 and 1991. In particular, the study visits made it possible for the partners to gradually extend their knowledge of each other and to compare their approaches to a specific theme.

The number of study visits carried out by each LMA varied between 5 and 20, with a considerable disparity between the Member States. In general, the Danish, Greek, French, Belgian, Spanish and British LMAs were more active. Attention should be drawn to the significant participation by the LMAs of Hinnerup (DK), Leuven (B), Valladolid (E), Suresnes (F), Swansea (UK), Athens and Thessaloniki (GR). By contrast, the Portuguese, Luxembourgish and Italian LMAs were less involved in the study visits of their network.

On average, study visits lasted five days and involved four professionals (from the fields of education, medicine, coordination or other⁽¹³⁾ dealing with a specific theme).

Joint study visits, involving up to 10 LMAs at once, particularly concerned new technologies and the integration of children and young disabled persons (Lisbon/Porto, Portugal, 29 May-3 June 1990; 8 LMAs) and the teaching of disturbed children and young people (Oviedo, Spain, 2-6 December 1990; 10 LMAs).

In the course of time, greater emphasis was placed on joint study visits which thus assisted the preparation of annual seminars at which it was possible to share the information collected on specific themes. The LMAs of Brussels (B), Ile de France (F) and Swansea (UK) were assisted by Community experts with regard to the preparation and physical organisation of the seminars (programme, accommodation etc.).

Three conferences over the 1988-1991 period were designed to set out the conclusions of annual network themes and to encourage general dissemination of the information obtained among education administrators, professionals and association representatives within the twelve Member States. LMA participation at the conferences took the form of drafting the discussion themes and proposing one or more speakers.

b) Difficulties

The shortage of resources at local and Community level resulted in:

- uneven participation by certain LMAs in exchanges and, particularly, in study visits;

(12) The first action programme (1983-1987) established in accordance with the Council Resolution of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 December 1981 on the social integration of handicapped people. OJ C 347 of 31 December 1981, page 1.

(13) Categories of professionals involved in study visits:
- head teachers, education administrators, inspectors, university professors, teachers, educationalists, speech therapists;
- doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists;
- politicians and councillors, coordinators, members of the school-integration working party, consultants, administrators

- limited dissemination of information about work undertaken (document or other dissemination);
- communication difficulties or difficulty in preparing seminars at local level, although 14 seminars of this type were staged after joint study visits⁽¹⁴⁾.

The exhaustion of Community funding and its inability to meet all requests made it essential for the LMAs themselves to provide partial or complete funding. Nine study visits were thus funded by the LMAs (the invited LMA paying all the costs or the organising LMA managing to arrange for local or regional authorities to pay all the costs involved). Given that neither local authorities nor schools generally have a budget for such activities, it is evidence of their interest in such exchanges that they provided partial or full funding.

Problems of internal organisation, qualifications of personnel or resistance to change on the part of parents or professionals restricted the participation of certain LMAs in network activities or hindered the development of innovative schemes at local level. Moreover, the language barrier limited the benefit of exchanges between European partners.

In addition to the organisation of seminars and study visits at national and European level, LMAs⁽¹⁵⁾ were responsible for coordinating exchanges with local services, cooperating with other networks (LMAs and training and rehabilitation centres) and with disabled-persons' organisations and for drawing up an annual report and assessment of their activities:

- LMAs have cooperated with parents' associations, education administrators, universities and teacher training colleges and, to a lesser extent, with health services and social services. Even though such professionals showed evident interest in the concept of integration, attitudes and practices were sometimes not dynamic enough to achieve true integration.

- Out of 16 LMAs replying to the questionnaire sent by European organisations for the disabled, 12 had formed a local coordinating committee, 6 mentioned the existence of a disabled-persons' organisation on such a committee and 7 stated that they had contacted other disabled-persons' organisations not represented on their local coordination committee. The LMAs of the school-integration network cooperated primarily with parents' associations.

- Self-evaluation does not appear to have been carried out systematically by all LMAs.

c) Positive Community Influence

Technical cooperation has helped people to become aware of the various national situations, given that the initial aim of the network was to meet the challenge of the widest possible integration of young disabled persons and to give priority to encouraging the development of a high-quality education system open to all children whether disabled or not.

At the level of the LMAs themselves, information and experience exchanges played an encouragement and/or emulation role and contributed to technical and pedagogical modifications in some of them.

Moreover, study of the education and teacher-training systems (both ordinary and specialised) revealed three different situations:

- Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands (and to a lesser degree Luxembourg) have a highly developed specialised education system (in the first three Member States, there are 8, 10 and 15 categories respectively of specialised schools, depending on the type of handicap).
- Portugal and Greece, by contrast, have a poorly developed specialised education system;

(14) The study visits concerned Cork (IRL), Hinnerup (DK), Lisbon (P), Thessaloniki (GR) Oviedo (S), Siena (I), Reutlingen (D), Athens (GR), Swansea (UK), Tholen (NL) Brussels (B), Toulouse (F) and Cagliari (I).

(15) As set out in the document "Organisation and functioning of the local model activities", submitted to the LMAs at the meeting of project leaders on 9-10 November 1988.

- Between these two extremes, Italy, Spain and Ireland have a clearly defined integration policy and a rather limited specialised system. Denmark, the United Kingdom and, to a lesser degree, France have developed a policy designed to reduce the size of the specialised education system.

Comparison of the ordinary education systems, which have a vital role to play in the integration process, has identified certain weaknesses: inappropriate syllabuses, shortage of resources, inappropriate training of teachers, inadequate coordination between professionals and virtually non-existent participation by parents.

Besides a better understanding of national systems, the positive impact of the school-integration network took the following forms at local level:

- local authorities, parents, professionals and pupils became more aware of the issues;
- integration schemes in education were expanded and strengthened;
- there was an increase in the number of schools or centres practising integration and a fall in the number of pupils in special education;
- there was closer cooperation between the specialised and ordinary systems, on the one hand, and between the sectors and services involved, on the other;
- local authorities became more aware of the viability of, and links between, integration programmes in the various countries and of the need to intensify these efforts;
- increased funding at local, regional or national level.

The impact local initiatives have had on educational reforms underway in certain Member States is also evidence of the impact technical cooperation has had in this field: trials of the new Education Act (LOGSE) in Spain by the country's two LMAs, development of the Porto regional initiative as an educational experiment throughout the north of Portugal and the influence of this on the national integration plan, participation by the Cork (IRL) LMA in drawing up the national Education Act, and the draft school-integration legislation based on the scheme operated by the Bonn (D) LMA. One could also mention the positive influence exerted by the HELIOS programme on education legislation in Greece. In the latter country, the number of special classes integrated within ordinary schools rose from 140 in 1988 to 520 in 1991. Member States have been able to take advantage of the experience built up by the LMAs, whereas the latter have benefited from various legislative facilities.

At Community level, the conclusions of the Rotterdam conference (Netherlands, 25-27 October 1989) on integrated education systems and apprenticeships, resulted in the Resolution of the Council and the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council of 31 May 1990⁽¹⁶⁾.

d) Experience transfer and information dissemination

Although the language barrier considerably slowed document dissemination, LMAs were regularly informed about the dates of visits, topics and results. By contrast, the shortage of resources and of personnel meant that communication between the LMAs and the other levels of the programme remained limited.

In certain Member States, the absence of coordination with regard to integration policy, or the exclusion of education from it, restricted the dissemination of information on activities carried out under the HELIOS programme. In other Member States, excessive centralisation restricted the scope for local planning and management.

(16) Resolution of the Council and the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council of 31 May 1990 concerning integration of children and young people with disabilities into ordinary systems of education. OJ C 162 of 3 July 1990, page 2.

Exchanges of experience between the LMAs of the school-integration network, and in some cases with other networks, highlighted three kinds of transfer:

- transfers concerning modification of the necessary structures: accessibility of school buildings, organisation of leisure activities (these two examples primarily concerned the Alave (E) LMA in the school-integration network);
- structural transfers: school organisation, management of teams and resources, coordination of services or the transfer of models for the assessment of integration programmes;
- functional transfers: models of cooperation between ordinary and special schools, use of new technologies, application of new strategies for the integration of young people with a mental handicap.

In addition, training projects were developed between European partners and in cooperation with activities outside the network. These projects involved the training of professionals working with autistic young people, training in new technologies or research into new techniques in the apprenticeship field.

e) Conclusions and future prospects

There is in general no doubt that these local activities will continue once the programme has finished. Some LMAs plan to extend their activities at national level or to other levels of education, perhaps into new fields of action. By contrast, the absence of Community funding risks comprising the continuity of exchanges or of joint projects between European partners. In this context, it would be helpful to have more teachers directly involved in network activities and to give greater emphasis to strategy assessment during joint study visits which bring together not only those active in the field but also administrators and politicians.

The LMAs within the school-integration network have progressively acquired experience of Community programmes. They were all involved in the ARION exchanges, 30% of them participated in the ERASMUS exchanges or in the LINGUA programme and some benefited from the MINERVA or ATENEA programmes. This participation by the network in other Community programmes favoured dissemination of information about the Community programme and permitted some, albeit rather limited, links with the ERASMUS working parties with regard to the training of specialised teachers. Moreover, the HORIZON initiative has given the LMAs scope for extending their operations at European level.

2.2.2.2. Local Model Activities II - Vocational training and rehabilitation, economic integration (LMA II)

a) Developments

The second local model activities network was designed to promote economic integration of the disabled through a Community approach based on the best innovatory experience in the Member States. The 27 LMAs in the economic-integration network have therefore developed research projects concerning vocational training, the coordination of existing services, and the labour market for persons with varying categories of disability.

- To ensure that the various aspects of economic integration were taken into account, the projects were quite varied; ranging from highly specialised projects to much more comprehensive ones: evaluation, orientation, placement or monitoring services, individually-based vocational training, prospects for the training or employment of mentally-handicapped persons or the mentally ill, use of new technologies, models of cooperation between ordinary and specialised institutions, job-creation strategies at local level...

- Apart from the LMAs of Bologna (I) and Lisbon (P) (concerned with visual and auditory handicaps respectively), 8 LMAs dealt more specifically with persons suffering from a mental handicap or mental illness⁽¹⁷⁾. 10 LMAs focused primarily on the physically handicapped, while nine did not specialise in any particular disability.

More generally, the prior Community experience of certain LMAs benefited the entire network. Given that the network's objectives were the continuation of the former District projects, seven members of the LMA II network (i.e. approximately 26%), had participated in the earlier Community programme. Participation in other European programmes also involved four LMAs⁽¹⁸⁾. Finally, in 59% of the cases network members were working on a project launched at an earlier date.

Nevertheless, the relatively high number of participants and the diversity of their projects proved a major brake on the effective implementation of the network. Some LMAs such as those of Liege (B) Daphni (GR) Bologna (I) and Lille/Kortrijk (F-B) had some initial difficulty in fitting into the network. The choice of LMAs tended to encourage the creation of sub-groups on specific themes, although this did not damage the network's cohesion when it came to seminars or annual conferences. Some 17 or 18 months were required to achieve an effective level of cooperation between network partners.

Technical cooperation took the form of three seminars, three conferences, 116 visits organised and a total 208 study visits carried out by the network's LMAs to their partners between December 1988 and December 1991. In order to facilitate communication between European partners, almost 7% of the budget for study visits was devoted to interpreting expenses.

- The number of study visits carried out by each LMA between December 1988 and December 1991 varied between 3 and 22, with a considerable variation between Member States. The Dutch, German, British and Danish LMAs were generally the most active. Attention should be drawn to the extensive participation by the LMAs of Dordrecht (NL), Offenburg (D), Genk-Hasselt (B), Aarhus (DK) and Newton Abbey (UK). By contrast, the Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, Greek and Luxembourgish LMAs appeared to be less involved in their network's study visits.

- Three professionals⁽¹⁹⁾ were involved in each study visit on average and the visits generally lasted between four and five days.

- The introduction of joint study visits with effect from 1990 and 1991 made it possible to involve the LMAs more closely in the preparation of seminars and conferences⁽²⁰⁾. These involved up to eight LMAs (joint study visits to Dudelange, L; 17-20 March 1991; protected or unprotected salary systems on the labour market).

(17) - LMAs specialised in the mentally handicapped : Badajoz and Murcia (E), Caldas da Rainha (P), Tullamore and Dublin (IRL)

- LMAs specialised in the mentally ill: Abensberg (D), Daphni (GR), Rieti (I)

(18) These were the LMAs of Rieti (I; AZIMUTH project), Genk-Hasselt (B; INTERREG), Lille/Kortrijk (F/B; transnational ESF scheme) and Dudelange (L; ERDF scheme)

(19) Depending on the nature of project, the teams assembled by the LMAs comprised: trainers, teachers and educationalists, psychologists, ergonomists, technicians and computer scientists, sociologists, economists, social workers, craftsmen, administrators of specialised establishments...

(20) The joint study visits to Murcia (E; 17-22 September 1991), Offenburg (D); 8-13 October 1991), and Dordrecht (NL; 31 October - 1 November 1991) all contributed to the preparation of the conference at Patras (GR) in November 1991.

In addition to the joint meeting of the three LMA networks at Brussels in November 1988, three thematic seminars were subsequently organised by the LMAs of Caudan (F), Dublin (IRL) and Rieti (I) on the topics of evaluation at all stages of the economic integration process and the specific difficulties encountered by women in obtaining work (1989), special and ordinary vocational training systems and vocational training for the mentally handicapped (1990), salary systems and the elimination of employment obstacles (1991).

Because these conferences were open to a wider audience, the LMAs worked on fixed annual themes, primarily stressing more general trends, fields of research or strategies being developed. 25% of the time devoted to annual conferences was spent in discussions within restricted groups.

b) Difficulties

The LMAs in the economic-integration network encountered specific difficulties which hindered the full development of their projects: red tape, a lack of understanding on the part of official recruitment services, reluctance by employers to employ the mentally handicapped or mentally ill, inadequate public services (transport, etc.).

- The Dublin (IRL) in particular expressed its regret at the absence of any employment-assistance policy. The LMA at Caudan (F) experienced difficulty in finding a balance between the value of individualised training for the persons involved and the demands of employment on the open labour market. Finally, the diversity of training methodologies used by cooperatives and associations led to some difficulty experienced by the LMA at Caldas da Rainha (P).
- Apart from the difficulty in finding trainers with a knowledge of sign language and the shortage of specialised personnel in government employment-assistance services, the absence of similar projects at both national level and within the Community network significantly limited the scope for exchanges in the case of the Lisbon (P) LMA, which is specialised in the guidance, vocational training and employment of the deaf.

While seminars and conferences played a vital role in formulating the major conclusions and in the comprehensive and coherent development of the network, it was the study visits which were most valued by the participants. Less formal and on a smaller scale, individual or group study visits gave network members an opportunity to gain a deeper and more specific knowledge of the topics addressed. Language barriers, however, sometimes restricted their benefits. For the same reason, some activities remained relatively unknown within the network. The time elapsing between the meeting of project leaders in November 1988 and the first thematic seminar in September 1989 also acted as a brake on the dynamic implementation of the network. In some cases, partners lack at the necessary dynamism or any clear objective. Internal management difficulties were also noted in the case of six LMAs.

Inadequate funding and staffing shortages were reflected in uneven participation by LMAs in Community exchange programmes. In particular some study visits had to be paid for by the LMAs⁽²¹⁾. The smaller LMAs, with fewer members, were not always able to continue their activities (particularly in the training field) and at the same time participate in individual or joint study visits). It is worth ensuring that LMAs are adequately large and can benefit from political or financial aid at local and national level. Such differences between LMAs were reflected in the follow-up to work, the dissemination of their results and even the viability of their structures⁽²²⁾.

(21) E.g.:
- the Tullamore (IRL) LMA visiting the LMA at Newton Abbey (UK, 22-23 February 1990);
- the Dublin (IRL) LMA visiting those of Rieti and Rome (I, 22-23 April 1991);
- the Hannover (D) LMA visiting that of Silkeborg (DK, 19-22 August 1991).

(22) Examples are the structures of the Caudan (F) and Offenburg (D) LMAs, whose activities have been threatened by national funding considerations or changes in the local environment.

Moreover, according to the Hannover (D) LMA, the absence of coordination between the various services at local or regional level significantly limited information dissemination and hampered the drafting of a coherent integration strategy. By contrast, the regular meetings organised by the Spanish, Dutch, British (and Greek at the beginning of the programme) coordinating groups made it easier to arrange exchanges at national level.

c) Positive Community Influence

Technical cooperation within the economic-integration network led to major changes in the following fields: evaluation, orientation and guidance, placement and assisted employment, salary systems, job creation and the use of new technologies, particularly in vocational training.

Locally-run initiatives generally showed the available scope for the training and economic-integration of the disabled, although specialised institutions continued to have an important role as resource centres, particularly for the more severely handicapped. The key importance of the person's capacities, rather than an exclusively medical definition of the handicap, was reaffirmed.

Moreover, comparison of the placement systems in the various Member States revealed a shortage of qualified personnel, inappropriate methods and the absence of appropriate structures for following up individuals in employment. Social integration and particularly accessibility, housing and transport proved to be perfectly complementary to the LMA II approach to achieving the economic integration of the disabled. In addition, some LMAs were able to describe their strategy of comprehensive care the individual, stressing the two key aspects of economic integration: the person's profile, desires, knowledge and capacities, on the one hand, and the job profile on the other (particularly the "trajectcoaching" concept developed by the Genk-Hasselt LMA). Managing directors have been progressively made more aware of economic integration of the disabled and of the vacancies in SMEs encouraged in all Member States. Particular attention was paid to the scope offered by new technologies: distance learning, computerisation of data on persons suffering from a mental handicap, or using computers to help those with a physical or visual disability.

As far as the target groups of the disabled are concerned, the successful projects by certain LMAs involving the mentally handicapped have encouraged others to extend their field of operations and to consider the potential for training these people or employing them in an unsheltered environment. Participation by disabled women was relatively low but this aspect was taken into account in a number of technical-cooperation activities, particularly as part of the Caudan (F) seminar. More generally, many LMAs have extended their field of action during the HELIOS programme, either in terms of the target group or the activities undertaken. For example, the Amsterdam (NL) LMA has refocused its research activities on more specific action in the field, notably by inaugurating in August 1991 an advice centre for the employment of the disabled.

Moreover, participation in the HELIOS programme by the 27 LMAs of the economic-integration network heightened the motivation of the teams of professionals involved and made it possible for most of them to operate at a European level. In addition, a number of study visits such as those to Caudan (F), Aarhus, Silkeborg (DK), Lisbon, Caldas da Rainha (P) and Achaia (GR) gave rise to local seminars.

d) Experience transfer and information dissemination

The diffusion of information about activities under the HELIOS programme took the form of brochures describing the LMAs, videos, summary documents on the conclusions of Community exchanges and/or formal or informal contacts at conferences, seminars and study visits. Nevertheless, the lack of immediate feedback doubtless hampered exchanges.

Approximately three quarters of the LMAs in this network have been members of local or national consultative committees, putting them in a position to ensure the dissemination of experience and information about the HELIOS programme, thus enhancing their multiplier effect.

Technical cooperation between the LMAs in the economic-integration network took the form of experience transfer in fields such as evaluation, orientation, placement, vocational training (both conventional and distance learning), training in new technologies for the mentally handicapped, the training of trainers, SMEs and integration firms, as well as active participation by industry and company management in LMA work. A number of concepts, such as the development of a comprehensive approach to integration or the deinstitutionalisation of the mentally handicapped, have progressively spread throughout the Member States.

One example of the transfer of know-how under the HELIOS programme is the cooperation between the LMAs of Hannover (D), Bologna (I) and Silkeborg/Skive (DK) with regard to using new technologies in vocational training and the employment of the disabled. It is planned to display the material results of this joint project at CEBIT-Hannover (a world-ranking computer fair in March 1992). One should also highlight the close cooperation between the LMAs of Dudelange (L) and Offenburg (D) with regard to ongoing training seminars for the training personnel of the two LMAs. Four study visits were devoted to setting up this cooperation.

Nevertheless, one must stress that the scope for transferring strategies or methods was often governed by wide-ranging legislative or cultural contexts and the real capacity for adaptation of the experience transferred.

Interaction between members of the various networks in the programme took the form of participation by certain LMA I and III in conferences, seminars or study visits organised by LMA II. For example, the Brussels conference (B, 11-12 January 1990) brought together the LMA II and the centres' network, whereas the conferences at Hannover (D, 10-12 December 1990) and Patras (GR, 25-27 November 1991) brought together the LMA II and members of the German and Greek networks respectively. Moreover, six representatives of the centres' network attended the Caudan seminar (F, 21-22 September 1989), while six members of other networks participated in the Dublin seminar (IRL, 2-3 April 1991). In return, the LMAs of the economic-integration network responded positively to the invitation extended by the centres' network⁽²³⁾. In general, one must recognise the weakness of inter-network contact, which is partly due to inadequate financial resources and staffing.

With regard to participation by disabled-persons' organisations in the local coordination committees of the LMAs in the economic-integration network, the questionnaire sent to them revealed that:

- 16 of the 18 LMAs which replied had a local coordination committee. Of the other two, one nevertheless maintained contact with disabled-persons' organisations outside this committee.
- 12 LMAs included disabled-persons' organisations on their local coordination committee and 10 of these LMAs had contacts with other disabled-persons' organisations outside the committee.
- 4 LMAs did not have disabled-persons' organisations on their committee but one of these maintained other contacts with disabled-persons' organisations.

(23) The Offenburg (D) LMA did in fact visit the Pengwern Hall (UK) centre and that in Copenhagen (DK). The Bologna (I) LMA visited the Birmingham (UK) centre for the visually handicapped

e) Conclusions and future prospects

The 27 LMA II forming the network have contributed both to the implementation of activities at local level and to the promotion of an overall Community policy aimed at the integration of the disabled.

Promotion of principles such as equality of opportunity for the disabled, or the adoption of new national policies in the fields of evaluation, training, placement or employment are evidence of the active role played by the LMAs of the economic-integration network in the application of the Council Recommendation concerning employment of the disabled in the Community(24).

Apart from the desire expressed by the majority of LMAs in the economic-integration network to continue their activities, they expressed a wish to continue the transnational relationships established under the HELIOS programme. Eight categories of projects have therefore been put forward under the HORIZON initiative. Three projects involve the mentally handicapped. Six have apparently been adopted by the Member States.

2.2.2.3. Local model activities III - Social integration and an independent way of life (LMA III)

This local model activities network is designed to promote modification of the physical environment of the disabled and the coordination of services to aid their social integration. The activity themes have accordingly involved modified housing, assistance in daily life, mobility, accessibility and transport. The majority of the networks members were participating for the first time in a Community action programme on behalf of the disabled: the only ones having participated in the preceding programme were the LMAs of Gelsenkirchen (D), Salamanca, Mostoles (E) and Coimbra (P).

While some of the LMAs in this network were drawn from the public sector and others from the private sector, some had an intermediate status. One must stress the significance of the status of the LMA in promoting innovative action to ensure an independent way of life for the disabled. This status may in fact govern or influence the likelihood of political or financial support for an innovative integration policy by the LMAs. Success in these has generally depended on the existence of national or regional support, a link between technical and management levels and the willingness of professionals to adapt their methodologies, objectives, qualifications, financial resources, involvement and flexibility to assist the disabled.

The objectives of the LMAs reflected both precisely determined fields of action and the results obtained in achieving the social integration of the disabled. Fields of action were linked to annual themes (modified housing, mobility and transport, access to public buildings, enhancement of the awareness of the professionals involved and cooperation with the suppliers of local services. The results obtained through the action of network members had to yield improvements for the disabled in terms of their housing, environment and social contacts, education and training opportunities, job opportunities, participation in leisure activities and self-confidence, together with enhanced public awareness. To this end, all network members established a local consultative committee and a local technical committee to assist them, thanks to the participation of locally elected members and local technical experts representing the services engaged in providing an independent way of life for the disabled, and thanks to the increasing participation by their representative organisations throughout the HELIOS programme.

a) Developments

Most of the local model activities had begun the experimental phase of their activities before participating in the HELIOS programme. For the others, Community activity represented a new initiative requiring preparation and the commitment of sufficient technical, human and financial resources. Most network members employed a multidisciplinary team whose specialities varied in accordance with the target group or the action undertaken (psychologists, sociologists, teachers, Braille specialists, medical and paramedical personnel, etc.). Nine LMAs launched schemes to encourage an independent way of life and to eliminate physical and socio-psychological barriers encountered by persons with a physical or sensory handicap. Nine network participants worked on deinstitutionalising services and promoting an independent way of life for persons with a mental handicap or mental illness. Finally, the other network members promoted an independent way of life for all categories of disability.

Knowledge of the actual status of services and care in the Member States was very limited at the beginning of the HELIOS programme. Nearly a year and a half elapsed before network members could work effectively as partners and benefit from each other's points of view, after having overcome the difficulties associated with the size and disparity of the network. Nevertheless, all participants showed a high level of motivation and dynamism right from the start, as is apparent from their participation and study visits. Moreover, network members received help from the experts appointed to assist the Commission in organising the structures needed for such partnership work. Working hypotheses were therefore adopted to allow for the adaptation of annual themes to reflect the interests and projects of each LMA:

- the themes of seminars and conferences were modified to meet the specific needs of the target groups, with parallel sessions being organised;
- individual or group study visits on specific themes were organised and shared aspects identified with regard to the methodology and strategy of the action undertaken. Two conferences and four seminars were organised during the HELIOS programme. The conferences, seminars and study visits organised each year enabled detailed examination of many aspects of the annual themes. The seminar served as the starting point for the work, this subsequently being expanded on during the study visits before being presented in a fuller form at the network's plenary conferences. A total of 90 study visits were organised by this network and a total of 192 study visits to their Community partners were carried out by social-integration LMAs. The number of visits arranged by each LMA, either as guest or organiser, varied between one and 22 between December 1988 and December 1991. The greatest participation was by Luxembourgish, Italian, Greek and Danish LMAs. One should stress the high level of participation of the LMAs of Belluno (I), Esch-sur-Alzette (L), Alava (E), Champigny-sur-Marne (F), Jaihay (B), Nykøling-Falster (DK) and Thessaloniki (GR). By contrast, German, Dutch, British and Irish LMAs generally carried out few study visits.

Coordination at national level was usually inadequate and contacts were generally established by network members on an individual basis. Regular meetings were, however, held in Spain, Portugal, United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark. These were particularly useful in allowing participants to obtain an understanding of each other's work, to establish common action strategies and to share a range of experience. The Commission paid an annual subsidy to each network member to cover local coordination expenses (employment of an additional person, rent of office space, etc.). This subsidy sometimes played a decisive role in the process of change at local level and permitted joint management of projects by different services dealing with the same aspect of independent life styles for the disabled, or to coordinate their services to reflect individual needs in terms of several aspects of this. Effective use of this coordination budget varied considerably depending on the size of the grant, the LMA's perception of its coordination role, the sectors and services involved, the needs tackled, etc.

b) Difficulties

The first year of the HELIOS programme had to be devoted to preparatory work; analysing annual themes and defining a joint mode of action which would encompass the interests and activities of each partner. Inadequate financial resources and the absence of appropriate legislation also slowed or even prevented the execution of some kinds of projects planned by the LMAs. For example, door-to-door transport services rely entirely on limited national resources.

In some Member States these difficulties were aggravated by the absence of a coherent policy for the disabled. They thus blocked the development of projects designed to establish a transitional period covering the change from institutional life to life in the community for persons with a mental handicap or mental illness. Political will and commitment, together with effective national coordination, are vital for the implementation of the results and information obtained by this network, whose exchanges were moreover occasionally limited by inadequate linguistic knowledge on the part of certain participants. Finally, information dissemination suffered from a shortage of funding.

c) Positive Community Influence

Network activities influenced the field of application and the working methods of the participants. Most obtained a better understanding of existing needs and of the need to eliminate both socio-psychological and technical barriers and have been able to put into practice the techniques and ideas of other network members. The LMA at Jaihay (B) was thus able to extend its work with multiply-handicapped children to include physically-disabled adults, in cooperation with associations for the physically disabled, with the aim of encouraging them to defend their own interests and of eliminating physical barriers. One should also mention of the work of the Spijkenisse (NL) LMA, which extended its work to cover the employment of persons with a mental handicap.

Promotion and social integration and an independent life style for the disabled at Community level also took the form of enhanced cooperation between services and associations at local level. Participation in the HELIOS programme improved access to these and resulted in their support for the launching of joint projects at Peissenberg, Nürnberg, Gelsenkirchen (D), Portalegre, Porto (P), Banff, Dyfed (UK), Sint-Niklaas (B), Salamanca, Mostoles, Alava (E), Rhodes, Thessaloniki (GR), Belluno, Abruzzo (I) and Bordeaux (F). New services were also created, while identification of shared problems led to seeking a number of solutions with the aid of partners incorporated in the network early on. Some LMAs met on several occasions to improve their staff's mastery of the process of social integration of the disabled. The major change brought about by the HELIOS programme was the very large degree of acceptance by professionals, politicians and managers of the philosophy of socially integrating the disabled and their acknowledgement of the necessary conditions to achieve this. Concrete improvements at local, regional and national level, together with methodological consolidation, therefore proved possible, either through better multidisciplinary work by local services or by establishing the necessary expertise and services. In general, a large number of projects by this network aimed at enhancing the independence of persons with a mental handicap or mental illness.

d) Experience transfer and information dissemination

Local model activities in the field of social integration and an independent way of life developed new approaches in a number of directions. They exchanged and modified their programmes covering the transition period between institutional life and life in the community, placing emphasis on the educational role of aid teams for the disabled person and placed at their disposal accommodation for transition periods. The trends associated with this work by LMAs were the progressive closure of institutions, the extension of target groups to more serious disabilities, matching integration to individual needs and training the disabled person in independent living. To this end, local model activities conducted training for their own staff and awareness-enhancement programmes for professionals, families, decision-makers and public opinion.

Study visits played a key role in the dissemination of this information and in the network's scope for action, despite linguistic problems. At national level, there is often a need for better understanding and support of activities conducted, in order to simplify and facilitate the process of transferring ideas, methodologies and specific action.

A number of symbiotic links were established during the programme and these could be considerably more widely exploited at regional and national level. Moreover, the creation of joint projects between network members is a sign of the good cooperation and good dissemination system existing within the network.

e) Conclusions and future prospects

The LMAs in this network wish to continue their current approach to activities and to extend their field of action and their transnational cooperation. Consolidation of links and the involvement of the various partners at local level would seem to be a primary objective. Other action fields are the strengthening of legislation, ongoing information of professionals and management and an increase in the number of services offered to the disabled, exploiting the practical experience gained by the LMAs. Overt political will is vital to the implementation of the information gained by this Community network, together with all necessary resources (including employment) for the social-integration process. This LMA network contributed to the implementation of the Council Resolution of 21 December 1981⁽²⁵⁾ by promoting action at local level to eliminate physical and a socio-psychological barriers. To this end, it has concentrated its activities on independent life styles (housing, home help, mobility, accessibility and transport) and wherever possible devoted its attention to promoting other services associated with vocational training, employment, social activities and leisure pursuits.

2.2.3 Specific action concerning an independent way of life

The annex to the Decision establishing the HELIOS programme⁽²⁶⁾ calls for the implementation of a special programme to promote an independent way of life, which covers the following fields:

- mobility and transport;
- access to public buildings and services (including cultural and leisure);
- housing, including equipment and home help to allow independent living in one's own home.

(25) OJ C 347 of 31 December 1981, p. 1

(26) Decision 88/231/EEC, OJ L 104, p. 42, List of Specific Actions, b)

a) Objective of the programme

The aim of the special programme was to promote model projects carried out in these fields within the Member States each year. In order to select and recommend these successful projects, the Commission awarded prizes on the basis of the findings of a jury and an additional assessment. These non-monetary prizes were awarded on the occasion of a conference or exhibition on promoting an independent way of life for the disabled. The programme needed to have a coherent objective and approach and to benefit from regular promotion. Because of force of circumstances in the form of the Gulf War, the 1991 award ceremony had to be postponed until 1992. These conferences were attended by representatives of LMAs, members of the Liaison Group and the Dialogue Group, together with the winners and members of independent, international juries appointed by the Commission.

b) Procedure and selection criteria

Candidates were proposed by nine disabled-persons' organisations within the Liaison Group and by one government expert for each Member State. Each of these nine disabled-persons' organisations could put forward a nomination of the three categories of prizes (i.e. a total of 27 nominations each year). Each government expert could put forward two nominations for each of the three categories (i.e. at total of 72 nominations each year).

The juries comprised 12 leading experts (one for each Member State) from the fields of architecture, town planning, rehabilitation, sociology, transport, psychology and law. These juries produced a short list of the above candidates. It was felt essential that the members of the jury should be sponsored by international organisations representing or comprising disabled persons with the additional support of professionals, institutions or universities. Criteria for jury membership therefore included:

- a specialised professional qualification;
- a disabled family member or personal knowledge of disability;
- a high reputation within one's own profession;
- having contributed within that profession to the promotion of an independent way of life at national, European or international level.

Finally, the composition of the jury had to reflect the interests of users and of professionals in the three award categories. The chairman of the jury had to be experienced in the assessment of projects and in the role of assisting the jury in reaching its verdict.

Accordingly, each year saw the nomination of a hundred project promoters, each of whom was asked to fill in a pre-selection form and to host "rapporteurs" so that their projects could be examined *in situ*. Participation in this special programme (also referred to as a competition) was open to local model activities, disabled-persons' organisations, companies and to private or public organisations.

To be eligible, projects had to:

- have a reputation for commitment and success in implementing a policy of equal opportunities and choice in the field of an independent way of life;
- be unique and innovative and be carried out and/or begin operations during the three years preceding the year in which the prize was awarded;
- have made an obvious contribution to the social integration of the disabled and the promotion of an independent way of life;
- represent a model for similar projects in other Community regions.

The incentives offered to the candidates were:

- that their project would be exhibited and recognised, thus giving it publicity at European level;

- scope for building up their knowledge of an independent way of life by visiting award-winning promoters;
- enhancement of their status and position in their own country and consolidation of their pioneer and innovative activities;
- more powerful promotion of an independent way of life as a fully-fledged field throughout the Community;

The projects presented sometimes showed that limited financial resources were not necessarily an obstacle to the pioneer or the innovator and that there was not always a clear correlation between the level of funding and the value of the project. Sources of funding for projects were varied, including:

- private funding through subscriptions or donations after a publicity campaign;
- funding from central government, local authorities or semi-state organisations;
- funding and responsibility shared between central government, local authorities and semi-state organisations;
- mixed public and private funding.

A project was described as small if the total cost did not exceed 35 000 ECU.

c) Experience shared and conclusions

The successful projects revealed a high level of detailed attention paid to the disabled and to the encouragement of independence and self-confidence, together with keenness to establish mutual cooperation to solve their integration difficulties. These projects highlighted the diversity of possible solutions, depending on cultural attitudes and socio-economic conditions, together with the interlinking of the award categories. This was because an independent life style can only be achieved by combining the workplace and an obstacle-free living environment so that disabled persons can move about and live there freely. The selection process also showed that it was not always easy to classify the nominated projects within an appropriate category. Accordingly, it would be advisable to increase the number of fields for which prizes are awarded.

Two municipal organisations won several prizes: the Patronats Municipals de Disminuïts de Barcelona won prizes in all categories in 1989, while the same year the Committee on Housing, Transportation and Technical Aids, Copenhagen, obtained two prizes in the categories "Access to public buildings and facilities" and "Housing (including material and personal support)". Incidentally, the majority of prizes went to private associations (40 awards), followed by municipalities (17 awards), public organisations (11 awards), private companies (10 awards) and local or regional bodies (8 awards). Some Member States had prize-winning organisations, services or institutions in all award categories each year: Denmark, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Finally, one should mention of the network of centres and projects of vocational training and local model activities which obtained a prize: these were the city of Gelsenkirchen (D - LMA III), the local model activity at Alava (E - LMA III), the Pameijer Foundation (NL - Rehabilitation Centres Network) and the city of Rhodes (GR - LMA III).

In the "Mobility and Transport" category, there were a wide range of successful projects. A number were "across-the-board" solutions, others were limited to specific groups or even to individuals. The promoters within this category often encountered difficulties in convincing the public that disabled persons were also entitled to participate in society's activities. The special programme on an independent life style therefore highlighted the need to raise awareness and to inform the public about the needs of the disabled, even if these comprise but a minority social group. The majority of award-winning projects in this category concerned integrated transport plans to make a number of types of public transport more accessible or to enhance the accessibility of a particular transport mode. Other prizes were awarded for projects concerning access to tourism (the publishing of Braille guides or city maps), sport and the furnishing of services or green zones.

In the "Public buildings and facilities" category, a growing number of public and private bodies of different Member States have constructed buildings accessible to the disabled. Nevertheless, the clients and architects sometimes failed to consult either the interested persons or their colleagues with greater experience in this field. Most of the prizes were awarded to projects enhancing the accessibility and an independent life style of a category of disabled persons or involving the provision of appropriate cultural, sports or leisure facilities. Other prizewinners concerned the accessibility of public transport, air travel, buildings used for education or vocational training, the adaptation of privately-owned buildings or the preparation of a guide to an accessible environment.

In the "Housing" category, a large number of remarkable projects were put forward, varying from architectural modifications to the needs of daily life and an accessible environment. The juries took into account cultural, economic and social aspects which had influenced the promoters' schemes within their own countries. A large number of the prizes were awarded to the projects dealing with the renovation, adaptation or construction of housing which favoured an independent daily life for a number of categories of the disabled, as well as to projects concerning appropriate measures to help specific and severe cases of disability. Other projects to encourage the coordination of local services or the integration and participation of the disabled within local life also won awards in this category.

Finally, it must be emphasised that the publicity engendered by the award of these prizes in the various categories has proved very effective: a number of prizewinners received requests for information or details about their project, with a view to applying these in similar projects. Work specifically on an independent life style as part of the HELIOS programme has therefore contributed to modifying the environment for the disabled and to aiding the transfer and exchange of experience proved successful in a number of cities within the Member States.

In the eyes of the public, the award-winning projects show schemes carried out to help the disabled as well as the scope for adapting the environment to their needs, while combating prejudices with regard to the limitations on their independent life style. Promoters' motivations varied widely - either to ensure that greater attention was paid to the needs of the disabled as consumers or to enhance public awareness of an accessible environment. The programme of prizes for specific schemes in the field of an independent life style therefore comprises an essential aspect of the dissemination of positive experiences within the Community and must be continued and extended to other fields in order to increase its impact. In this context, one could consider a travelling video-film exhibition of these schemes passing through the rural or urban areas of the Community, together with the establishment of a resource centre to encourage education and greater awareness in this field so beneficial to the disabled. The conferences at which the prizes were awarded can also be regarded as successful. Participants described them as very useful and informative.

2.2.4. Cooperation at European level between associations run by or for disabled people

a) Developments

The HELIOS programme set as its objective to continue, and where necessary extend, Community support to the European cooperation of non-governmental organisations (NGO) in the fields of vocational training and rehabilitation, economic integration, social integration and an independent way of life for disabled people⁽²⁷⁾. In order to achieve this objective, the Commission has made it a priority to cooperate with Europe-wide organisations run by or for the disabled which represent particular disabilities or integration fields. These European organisations, which are responsible for representing to the greatest possible extent the interests of the disabled at national and European level, have to comply with the following cooperation criteria and priorities, drawn up in cooperation with the organisations themselves during the HELIOS programme.

- They must represent disabled people or their families and, if possible, professions dealing with the rehabilitation or integration of the disabled,
- Have disabled people active in the leadership and management of the organisation's activities.
- Comprise representative national associations within the twelve Member States.
- Be run by a European committee elected democratically by the representatives of national associations.

The Commission has drawn up priorities for cooperation and participation in the HELIOS programme in order to designate the nine disabled-persons' representatives invited to submit proposals as part of the Liaison Group⁽²⁸⁾. The representatives of these organisations are therefore consulted by the Commission on policy initiatives and specific action undertaken during the Programme and have thus participated in the establishment of a Community policy for the disabled. This right to participate was associated with the following responsibilities:

- organising seminars and conferences, particularly as preparation for policy initiatives by the Commission and disseminating both information and successful experiences at Community level;
- submitting an annual programme of activities eligible for Commission funding;
- submitting to the Commission technical measures approved by as large as possible a proportion of national associations;
- promoting an exchange of information and experience at national and European level with various organisations and associations not directly involved in the HELIOS programme;
- regularly contributing to the editorial content of the HELIOS magazine.

In this way, the HELIOS programme for the first time made it possible to involve disabled-persons' organisations in Community activities. National disabled-persons' organisations were invited by their European organisations to reserve a section of their publications for Community activities on behalf of the disabled. Moreover, thanks to the Commission's support, European organisations were able to create publications specifically devoted to activities on a European scale.

(27) Decision 88/231/EEC, Article 3 d)

(28) Decision 88/231/EEC, Article 7 b)

Moreover, in order to ensure balanced representation of the various categories of the disabled and of varying national realities⁽²⁹⁾, the Commission has established a Dialogue Group of 30 disabled-persons' organisations. These organisations are able to appoint a representative to the Liaison Group in the form of an organisation representative of their disability category or specialised integration field.

Depending on their main interests and the topic being addressed, these organisations within the Liaison Group and the Dialogue Group have been invited by the Commission to participate actively in conferences, seminars, study visits and training sessions carried out within the framework of the network of vocational training centres and projects and of LMAs. Very few such organisations were, however, able to participate in these activities: out of the 30 members of the Dialogue Group, two organisations or their national associations took part in LMA seminars and four attended meetings of the centres' network. Moreover, only eight took part in study visits organised by these networks.

The principal activities organised by disabled-persons' organisations themselves were conferences and seminars. One should emphasise here that these activities involved all Member States and a large number of disability categories. For example, 184 working meetings were funded in 1991 as part of activities by disabled-persons' organisations. 92% of these activities were seminars and 80% involved study visits. 17% of these conferences and seminars were organised in France, 17% in Germany, 13% in the United Kingdom, some 11% in the Netherlands and 42% in the other eight Member States. In addition, a wide range of other activities received Commission funding, such as research, the publication of journals and assessment, technical-assistance and external-cooperation activities.

b) Difficulties

Europe-wide disabled-persons' organisations were invited to participate for the first time in European cooperation activities as part of the HELIOS programme. Although some complied in every respect with their obligations, others had some initial difficulties in making the transition to this level of cooperation.

There was only limited participation by disabled-persons' organisations in LMAs and in the centres' network. Members of the Dialogue Group took virtually no part in these activities, while members of the Liaison Group were not always invited to the seminars and conferences corresponding to their disability category or to their integration field. Reservations on the part of certain LMAs reduced their scope for participating in the activities of the HELIOS programme.

Moreover, the Commission had invited Europe-wide disabled-persons' organisations to get in contact with local, regional or national associations, in order to stimulate their participation in local model activities within their local coordination committees. The European organisations within the Liaison Group therefore contacted the LMAs in the corresponding disability category or integration field, taking into account factors such as their geographical distribution and scope for involvement. They sometimes experienced difficulty in obtaining information on the local or national associations eligible to participate in local coordination committees.

(29) Decision 88/231/EEC, Article 7 b)

Of the 80 LMAs involved in the HELIOS programme, 59 replied to a questionnaire sent by the organisations belonging to the Liaison Group. 51 of these 59 LMAs had set up a local coordination committee, usually featuring both public organisations and private institutions. 35 included a local or regional disabled-persons' organisation in their local coordination committee. One should point out that certain LMAs which had cooperated with disabled-persons' organisations in the context of the local coordination committee had also established contacts with other disabled-persons' organisations outside this structure (21 LMAs in all). Finally, despite the absence of a local coordination committee in some LMAs or the absence on such committees of disabled-persons' organisations, 10 LMAs had been in contact with disabled-persons' organisations outside these committees.

Although disabled persons and their friends and relatives had been particularly active in certain LMAs, an analysis of this questionnaire nevertheless shows that representation of the disabled, and consequently their opinion and needs, had not always been sufficiently taken into account by the LMAs operating under the HELIOS programme.

c) Positive Community Influence

With regard to activities organised by disabled-persons' organisations themselves as part of the HELIOS programme, all the European organisations were in a position to state their opinion on the priority to be given to conferences, seminars, study visits or other European cooperation activities submitted by them to the Commission for funding on the basis of their annual activity programme corresponding to their disability category or integration field. In particular, the conferences and seminars organised by members of the Liaison Group and the Dialogue Group resulted in the preparation of codes of good practice and the formulation of approaches which could serve as the basis for preparing policy in such significant fields as:

- the link between ageing and disability and the respective trends in the Member States (Florence, I; EUROLINK-AGE, 1990);
- the habitat of mentally-handicapped adults in Europe and the ethical problems associated particularly with bio-medical research (Dublin, IRL; International League of Societies for Persons with Mental Handicap - European Association, 1991);
- the legal status of disabled persons throughout their life in the European Community and necessary changes in long-term care (Milan, I; Mobility International, 1990).

Analysis of activities carried out by disabled-persons' organisations at local, regional, national or European level and funded by the Commission shows that:

- activities funded in 1991 concerned (in order of importance) hearing, medical, mental, visual and communication disabilities, mental illness and motor disabilities;
- with regard to disabled-persons' organisations specialised in a particular integration field, Community funding was provided for activities related to mobility, education, creativity, medical and functional rehabilitation, tourism, sport, prevention, aid to the young and old and, finally, to legal, economic and social protection, vocational training and employment. One must nevertheless stress that some cross-sectional topics such as employment and vocational training were tackled by activities funded by the Commission and carried out by organisations specialised in a particular disability category.

Attention should also be drawn to the studies, specialised publications, experimental projects and research carried out by disabled-persons' organisations during the HELIOS programme. Examples include the documentation in Braille published by the European Association for the Blind (UEA), the foreign-language teaching seminars organised by the European Community Regional Secretariat of the World Federation of the Deaf (ECRS), the interpreting services offered by the European Community Deaf and Blind Secretariat (ECDBS) and the training-methods workshops in the five new Länder in Germany organised by the European Association for Special Education (EASE). All of these activities, though initially aimed at rehabilitation and integration professionals, were subsequently directed increasingly at the disabled and their families.

Participation by disabled-persons' organisations in the activities of rehabilitation centres and LMAs also gave them an opportunity to put forward their policy on a topic or to contribute the first-hand experiences of disabled persons. Thematic seminars became more effective where disabled-persons' organisations and network members were able to compare their respective experiences and work in an integration field. An example in the field of school integration was the conference at Cagliari (I; 1989) at which representatives of the European Parents' Association (EPA) and of the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Community (COFACE) put forward their point of view.

With regard to economic and vocational integration, certain European organisations were able to contribute their experience to the seminars at Worms on rehabilitation systems and reentry in the labour market in the European Community (D; RI-ECA, 1989), Birmingham on the vocational training of the blind and partially sighted (UK; UEA-1990), Rome on integrated cooperatives for the employment of the mentally handicapped (I; ILSMH-1990), Rotterdam, Maastricht (NL) and Dublin (IRL) on the employment opportunities for the mentally ill on the open labour market (ERC - WFMH - 1989, 1990) and Valencia, on the training and vocational integration of the deaf (E; ECRS - 1990).

In the field of social integration, COFACE participated in the thematic seminar in Paris (F) on the ageing of the mentally handicapped (1990). All these seminars made it possible to exchange information or experience with professionals or technical experts in the fields of rehabilitation and integration. They gave disabled-persons' organisations an opportunity to pass on their knowledge of the difficulties encountered by the disabled, to highlight objectives or major trends and to encourage the introduction of a comprehensive policy at local, regional, national and Community level.

With regard to the specific action under the HELIOS programme to encourage an independent life style for the disabled, a large number of disabled-persons' organisations put forward model schemes in the fields of independent life styles, technical aids and employment. The following are some projects for which disabled-persons' organisations won awards:

- installing appropriate communications equipment in housing to allow the integration of persons with a hearing impairment (Association Amplitude - F - Associação Portuguesa de Sordos - P - 1989);
- integration of the blind in an open environment (Association Luxembourgeoise des Aveugles - L - 1989);
- accessibility study of the city of Athens (Spastics Society - GR - 1990);
- fitting out the Charleroi Exhibition Centre as a multi-sport complex for the disabled (Entente Carolorégienne pour la Promotion du Sport et des Loisirs pour Handicapés - B - 1990);
- organisation of a transport system and activities in many integration fields for several categories of the disabled in Catalonia (Federacion de Asociaciones de Minusválidos de la Autonomia Catalana - E - 1991).

Moreover, certain members of the Liaison Group took an active part in drafting Community policy initiatives for the integration of the disabled in a number of very specific fields:

- amendments to driving licences (ECRS);
- fiscal harmonisation of VAT and consequences for the disabled and their organisations (EBU);
- psychiatric reform in Greece and more particularly the situation of the Laros hospital (ERC-WFMH);
- Resolution of the European Parliament on official recognition of sign language in the European Community (ECRS).

Disabled-persons' organisations within the Liaison Group were also consulted with reference to the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers and concerning the draft Directive on the mobility and transport of persons with a mobility impairment.

Finally, activities undertaken by certain disabled-persons' organisations on a European scale have had a significant impact beyond the Community. Some European organisations have been a model for the creation of structures in other parts of the world. One example is the European Secretariat of the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH), which inspired the North American Regional Council, while the European Association of the International League of Societies for the Mentally Handicapped (ILSMH) led to a similar association being founded in Latin America. On the other hand, certain organisations such as the European Secretariat of the Disabled Peoples' International were able to exploit the prestige of their world organisation to undertake activities at European level. Moreover, the example offered by the policy on education for deaf children (ECRS), which achieved consensus throughout the Member States, could be the basis for discussions aimed at extra-Community application. Official recognition of sign languages in the European Community by the European Parliament also encouraged the World Federation for the Deaf to promote sign language at international level, particularly in the framework of the United Nations.

d) Experience transfer and information dissemination

The HELIOS programme highlighted the work of private organisations and aided the launch of structures or activities not previously existing in certain Member States, thanks to the know-how and experience of European disabled-persons' organisations. The European dimension of these organisations also made it possible to extend at Community level the policies for the integration of the disabled and to make these schemes more effective in coordinating activities dealing with a single topic. With regard to the HORIZON initiative, for example, members of the Liaison Group and Dialogue Group informed potential partners through their national associations and aided the preparation of transnational cooperation projects particularly in the fields of staff training for rehabilitation and education in new technologies, training in the sheltered-employment sector, micro-computer distance training, the training of sign-language interpreters, etc.

Members of the Liaison Group regularly contributed their proposals and comments on the subject of the development of the HANDYNET system and the collection of national data, in the form of information sent on by their national associations. Some organisations such as Mobility International (MI) or the European Association for Special Education (EASE) have played a role right from the start of the HANDYNET system. Moreover, the Commission's funding of coordination and expertise expenses incurred by the Liaison Group made it possible for them to disseminate information among the members of the Dialogue Group.

Finally, many organisations produce an information bulletin or journal through which they can channel to their members (disabled persons or persons working with them) and to their national organisations news on developments, techniques and trials in their field, policy information or specific information concerning their category of disability, together with a general overview of activities carried out within the HELIOS programme. Although they did not contribute sufficiently to the editorial content of the HELIOS magazine, European disabled-persons' organisations made a major contribution in enhancing public awareness in the Member States with regard to the wide range of aspects involved in the integration of the disabled.

e) Conclusions and future prospects

The HELIOS programme made it possible for disabled-persons' organisations to strengthen their structures and their mutual links at Community level. Closer cooperation must be sought between the local or national disabled-persons' organisations and the participants in Community networks. Against this background, evaluation of the work and projects conducted will have to be intensified, alongside an increase in the resources committed to coordination and experience transfer.

In addition, an extension of the HELIOS programme is needed at the pre-school and higher levels of education with regard to school integration, as well as at the levels of prevention, early intervention and functional rehabilitation. The disabled-persons' organisations want to see the HANDYNET system continuing its operations. Some of them are also concerned by the situation of the disabled in central and eastern Europe. Finally, the Commission has created a unit charged with cooperating with the disabled-persons organisations, providing technical assistance and acting as the contact organisation at Community level for disabled persons.

2.2.5. Access to creativity, sport and tourism

a) Developments

The development of organisations involved in sporting and creative activities for the disabled is a reflection of the importance of these activities in the life of disabled persons.

In this context, the Commission (assisted by experts) has, since the beginning of 1989, undertaken the coordination between Member States of activities in these diverse fields and has provided funding for events or projects designed to give the disabled greater access to creativity, sport and tourism. The Commission also cooperates with the European disabled-persons' organisation EUCREA⁽³⁰⁾, responsible more specifically for national and European projects in the field of creativity. Each year, EUCREA acts together with a sponsor to carry out its programme of bursaries awarded to artists (both disabled and able-bodied) and to therapists. Each sponsor undertakes to contribute 25 000 ECU, comprising the award of bursaries of 3 000 ECU and the appropriate media support.

b) Difficulties

Obtaining subsidies, seeking public recognition and the pursuit of different objectives can engender a certain degree of rivalry within the same field of activity. Some organisations have tried to carry out similar events at the same time in the same field, highlighting the need for coordination at European level.

Given that some 10% of the population of the Member States are disabled, one must stress their relatively low level of participation as active members of sports or creative organisations for the disabled.

(30) This European association was founded in December 1987 at Seville, on the occasion of the second European conference on the creativity of the disabled, and comprises a national committee in each Member State.

Finally, until society as a whole becomes truly aware of the importance of creativity and sport for the disabled, substantial resources will probably not be made available to them.

In the field of tourism, the British Tourist Board, in cooperation with the Commission, organised a European conference in March 1991 entitled "Tourism for all". This conference focused particularly on the tourist industry and the scope for providing an efficient service for disabled persons, rather than social services or disabled-persons' organisations.

c) Positive Community Influence

Analysis of the programme of events and projects funded by the Commission reveals a significant increase in the number of projects funded over the course of the programme.

Between 1988 and 1991, between 7 and 19 sports projects received Community funding. The proportion of truly sporting events has shown a steady growth, reaching 72% on average for that period. In addition to the Paralympic Games for the mentally handicapped, specific sporting events such as sailing and water-skiing for the physically handicapped, football for the deaf and cycling for the blind could be subsidised. The Commission has also supported work such as the collection of information on creativity and sport for the disabled, the production of a promotional film covering sporting activities at European level and the organisation of conferences or seminars.

With regard to creativity and therapy projects for the disabled, 8 subsidies were granted in 1988, for international arts meetings or events in the fields of music, theatre and dance, as well as exhibitions of paintings, or activities using new technologies as a means of expression, integration and therapy. The Commission has also stimulated the organisation of seminars such as "music and movement" (1989-1991, Vejle Amt - DK), or "Creativity and integration of the disabled" (1990/1991, Agios Spyridon, GR). Various European events have encouraged meetings between disabled and able-bodied artists and highlighted the creative abilities of all disabled people, particularly those with a mental handicap.

Whatever the nature of the projects funded, analysis by country reveals that Belgium and the United Kingdom are well to the fore, followed by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands in the case of creative activities and by Portugal with reference to sports. One bursary per country has also been granted by EUCREA, in cooperation with Very Special Arts and IBM-Europe respectively for the periods 1989-1990 and 1990-1991, these awards going to persons making an exceptional contribution to the development of artistic creativity among the disabled.

Apart from the increase in the number of projects funded, Community action has also contributed to the strengthening of a number of national organisations. An increase in the number of active members in leisure organisations is also a reflection of the growing interest shown in creativity and sports by disabled people themselves.

Creative expression and participation in sporting events have also contributed to the promotion and development of a positive image of the disabled among the public at large. Broadcasting of sporting or artistic events have played a key role in this regard. In Greece, for example, the entire population was able to watch on television an international basketball tournament which highlighted the participation of disabled sportsmen. Similarly, the Spanish press covered the youth sports festival over a three week period in summer 1991.

d) **Conclusions and future prospects**

One must emphasise the much greater awareness there is now of the beneficial effects for the disabled of creativity, sport and tourism as therapeutic tools, leisure activities, sources of personal development and job opportunities. Sport has proved to be an "exceptional form of communication between the peoples of the entire world"⁽³¹⁾, encouraging equality of opportunity between the able-bodied and the disabled. Involvement in a sport often helps the reintegration process, both physically and mentally, and strengthens the sense of leading a fully independent life. Promotion of these activities for the disabled is essential in a society where leisure activities are becoming ever more important.

Subsidies granted by the Commission to a range of sporting, creative or tourist events or projects has stimulated participation in these activities by disabled persons themselves and raised the profile of their sporting successes and artistic achievements among the public at large.

3 - INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION

3.1. HANDYNET system

a) Developments

Article 4(b) of the HELIOS programme Decision provides for the establishment of a system, "using new information technologies, for the collection, updating and exchange of information concerning the integration of disabled people", known as HANDYNET. The Annex to the abovementioned Decision specifies that the system will be reviewed by the Council on the basis of a Commission report and a Commission proposal for a Decision on the conditions for continuing the system after 1 January 1990⁽³²⁾. The Council actually decided to continue development of the HANDYNET system in the context of the HELIOS programme on 18 December 1989⁽³³⁾.

HANDYNET is a computerised system for the collection and exchange of information designed to help meet the needs of disabled people and their families, those working in the field concerned, administrative staff, manufacturers, etc..

In accordance with the provisions laid down in the HELIOS programme, work has been concentrated on the coordination and further development of the HANDYNET system, giving priority to the development of the HANDY AIDS module on technical aids for persons affected by impaired motor, visual, hearing or communication faculties⁽³⁴⁾.

The system design is innovative because it combines a factual information system (data bank), a daily information system (electronic newsletter) and a means of communication (electronic message system):

- The data bank comprises three interactive files on products or services at European level, commercial and non-commercial organisations associated with these products or services and regulations in force in the various Member States.
- The electronic newsletter provides information on events of Europe-wide significance and on new developments relating to products, services, organisations or regulations.

(31) Statement by Mr J. Delors, President of the Commission

(32) Report by the Commission to the Council concerning the establishment of the HANDYNET system, Brussels, 27 September 1989, COM(89)450 final.

(33) Council Decision 89/658/EEC of 18 December 1989 concerning the further development of the HANDYNET system in the context of the HELIOS programme.

(34) For practical reasons, the technical aids module has been divided into four submodules relating to these four categories of disability.

- The electronic message system provides an instantaneous means of communication between active partners on the HANDYNET system.

The creation of a European collection network with a coordinating body in each Member State has proved to be essential in order to control the quality of data, ensure the consistency of the information collected and coordinate data collection.

National Data Collection and Coordination Centres were designated on the basis of the expert knowledge and experience of organisations in possession of a national data bank and therefore already collecting and disseminating data on technical aids at national level. Data collection and coordination centres were established specifically for HANDYNET in Greece, Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg. However, not all Member States designated a data collection and coordination centre for each category of technical aids. Some centres contributed to a national network of collection centres, depending on the situation in each Member State.

The Commission's obligations, the obligations of the data collection and coordination centres and their obligations to each other are laid down in an agreement drawn up and signed by the Commission and forwarded to each of the national data collection and coordination centres on 30 April 1990 for signature. At the beginning of December 1990 all the national coordination centres, with the exception of the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany, had signed the protocols interpreting the agreement. The installation of workstations (data acquisition software⁽³⁵⁾, password) was carried out between January and March 1991, after each national centre had signed the contract.

In order to disseminate information, which is the responsibility of national authorities pursuant to Article 8 of the abovementioned agreement, it was necessary to designate several information and advice centres⁽³⁶⁾ as close as possible to the end user and the disabled person. Multilingualism, which has been a dominant factor in the development of the system, software design and collection, was justifiable for this very reason, i.e. it ensured the highest possible degree of accessibility whatever the geographic location of the user in Europe.

In accordance with the opinion delivered by the Advisory Committee in October 1989, the Commission set up a technical coordination group which meets four times a year and provides technical advice on the organisation of data collection and dissemination. It also draws up proposals on the HANDYNET system, its updating and development and ensures that information is transferred to Member States' representatives within the context of the Advisory Committee. It played a particularly important role in rendering the HANDYNET system operational between 1990 and the end of 1991.

In addition, further to a proposal presented at the group's third meeting in December 1990, four study groups comprising experts from the Member States were set up during 1991. The objectives of these groups were as follows:

- to draw up classification principles for technical aid modules (classification group);
- to modify collection structures and ensure consistency between the submodules (structures and protocols group);
- to draw up proposals for graphic image processing of technical aid modules (images and graphics group);
- to define a range of special interfaces, in particular for the blind or for people with a severe motor disability (special interfaces group).

(35) These data were then transmitted to the European Space Agency's (ESA) computer in Frascati (I), which centralises the data collected in each Member State.

(36) However, in view of Article 15(6) of the agreement, it is obviously beneficial for the national collection centre and the various data dissemination centres to be closely linked.

HANDYNET has been developed in accordance with a precise schedule on account of the lengthy initial software preparation and development stage required for both data acquisition and interrogation.

The following developments took place from January 1988 to December 1990.

- Analysis of information requirements in the field of technical aids for the motor disabled;
- Overall structure of the system established and preparation of:
 - the collection structures and protocols;
 - the interrogation procedure (multilingualism in particular);
 - data acquisition software;
 - interrogation software.

This preparatory work was also carried out simultaneously for the other submodules and was completed in June 1991 in the case of education software and in December 1991 in the case of technical aids for those with visual and communication disabilities.

The HANDYNET module on technical aids for people with motor disabilities became operational in 1991. A total of 18 944 items of information had been collected in the system by 31 December 1991. Workstations (on-line system) were installed between January 1991 and March 1991 and three training sessions took place: the first in Denmark in September 1990, the second in Luxembourg in March 1991 and the third in the Netherlands in December 1991. These taught staff at data collection centres how to use data collection software and how to update the information collected. Data collection could only begin in earnest in March 1991, the interface problem between national data banks and HANDYNET being resolved between May 1991 and September 1991 in the Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and France. Work on a CD-ROM version of HANDYNET was started in May 1991, and it was officially presented in Hoensbroeck (NL) in December 1991.

b) Difficulties

It was only possible to begin development of the HANDYNET system in general and the first HANDY AIDS module in particular once certain structures provided for in the HELIOS programme, notably the advisory bodies and the HELIOS Team of Experts, had been set up, and after a services contract had been concluded with the European Space Agency (ESA), whose central computer is capable of meeting the capacity requirements and, more particularly, the multilingual requirements of the system.

The main technical difficulty was multilingualism and the translation of software into the nine official Community languages⁽³⁷⁾.

The system also had to be adapted to technological developments, which are particularly numerous in this field, so the system became operational gradually. In actual fact, mini information processing, which had predominated at the start of the operation, was based to a large extent on host computers and their use by telecommunications networks. The HANDYNET system was therefore initially developed on-line as a centralised system⁽³⁸⁾. However, in order to provide greater flexibility and reduce the costs of consultation and the monitoring of technological developments, a version of HANDYNET was produced on compact disk and presented at the Hoensbroeck (NL) training session in December 1991.

(37) The appearance on one screen, for example, of information in Greek or in Danish (two languages with special characters) is a real data processing achievement.

(38) In the case of an on-line system, data is transferred from the centres to the host computer and vice versa by means of telecommunications.

In addition to the fact that it solves certain telecommunications problems encountered initially by Greece, Spain and Denmark⁽³⁹⁾, the CD-ROM offers various advantages, in particular:

- considerable scope for storing information due to the existence of a data compression and decompression programme;
- easy access for the user and all-round availability;
- wide distribution (no limit to the number of host computer ports);
- decrease in consultation costs in proportion to the number of users (conversely, the slow retrieval of on-line data makes the costs of interrogation high).

However, it is not possible to update the data contained on a CD ROM continuously. Nevertheless, provision has been made for regular updating of CD-ROM material and the up-to-date transfer of information may be carried out via the newsletter and the electronic message system.

The collection of data from March 1991 onwards raised some difficulties with regard to the compatibility between the data banks existing in some Member States and the HANDYNET system's collection structures. To avoid overloading national information systems, software interfacing national data and the European system was introduced in some Member States between May and September 1991⁽⁴⁰⁾. With regard to data collection itself, some national collection centres wanted to extend data collection to imported products because of special agreements concluded with non-member countries⁽⁴¹⁾. Some Member States such as Belgium expressed reservations in this respect owing to lack of staff and financial resources.

The subject of dissemination of information within the Member States was widely discussed.

- Firstly, it was necessary to ensure that control of dissemination of information was maintained, in particular by signing a special agreement with each dissemination centre. The dissemination of information to disabled people and fieldworkers was still obviously one of the system's priorities.
- Secondly, centres which already operated a national data bank might have regarded HANDYNET as a rival to their own product. The absence of a joint agreement between the centres on rules for data dissemination in fact led some of them to be opposed to extensive dissemination of information which would allow each centre to disseminate data collected by other centres.
- Finally, the general question was raised as to whether or not the information should be given free of charge. The Member States agreed that the information should be free to the end user. However, given the costs of collecting the data and the commercial nature of some national dissemination centres, seven countries were in favour of selling CD-ROMs to information centres, three were against and two did not express an opinion⁽⁴²⁾.

(39) Initially, these countries were confronted with, respectively: connection problems between the system and an X25 line, absence of an ESA node and the absence of a modem in the data processing configuration.

(40) The Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands and France.

(41) This was the case of Denmark in particular, on account of its special relations with the other Scandinavian countries.

(42) The United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Denmark, Belgium, Portugal and Luxembourg decided in favour of selling CD-ROMs; Greece, Spain and the Federal Republic of Germany wanted them to be offered free of charge to information centres; Italy and Ireland did not express an opinion. (Sixth meeting of the HANDYNET technical coordination group, Brussels, 31 October 1991).

c) Positive Community Influence

A total of 18 944 items of information had been collected in the system by 31 December 1991, 1 473 of which had been collected directly and 17 471 of which had been collected by interface software which transmitted national data to the HANDYNET system and had been requested by the Member States.

The HANDYNET system contributes to market transparency, since it allows technical, economic and operational comparisons to be drawn between the various products available in the Member States.

- In this respect, the European data bank, the electronic message system and the electronic newsletter can draw attention to new products on the market, giving disabled people the opportunity to assess the benefits and quality/price ratio in relation to existing products. Disabled people may then select the technical aid best suited to their disability in a much shorter time than if they had had to consult the files of numerous, widely dispersed organisations.
- The extent of information supplied on organisations will make it easy for the user and disabled people in particular to compile a list of organisations meeting a particular criterion, be it geographic or relating to a particular sector of activity or target group.
- In addition, the European system prevents certain manufacturers from monopolising the technical aids market and gives new manufacturers the opportunity of offering products of equal quality at truly competitive prices. New production opportunities might also be envisaged for products not manufactured in Europe. The system should also bring about an improvement in the quality of technical aids and a general reduction in price for the benefit of disabled people.
- Finally, some national social security reimbursement organisations expressed reservations about an over-rapid expansion of the market in that there might be increasing requests for subsidies. However, any increase in demand should be offset to a large extent by the general reduction in prices and a decrease in benefits for disabled people. Technical aids encourage greater mobility and, consequently, improve school, vocational and social integration. Disabled people should also benefit from increasing pressure to harmonise social security reimbursement schemes at European level.

The bonus offered by the European system, as opposed to the twelve national data banks combined, is its multilingualism and the homogeneity of its contents and also of the procedure for gaining access to the system.

- The data can be consulted in the nine official languages, regardless of origin, which would not be the case if the national data banks were simply combined.
- Furthermore, since the HANDYNET system is based on data collection at national level, the sharing out of tasks avoids duplication and allows each collection centre to concentrate on national data for entry into the system and to benefit from the output of information at European level.
- As data bank structures sometimes vary considerably, comparison of information is impossible without a minimum common structure.
- In addition, as there are just as many different interrogation procedures as there are national data banks, it would be very difficult for a user to obtain information by switching from one procedure to another.

Commercial and non-commercial organisations as well as private individuals have shown interest in the HANDYNET system. Disabled people, their families and those working in the field of rehabilitation mainly sought accurate information on technical aids and organisations. Manufacturers and distributors of technical aids wondered how to gain access to all the data on the system or the procedure to be followed for inserting information. Enquiries have come from individuals and organisations in both the European Community and non-member countries⁽⁴³⁾. Some non-member countries wished to establish cooperation in order to create compatible data banks. The HANDYNET system, which is kept constantly up-to-date with the Commission's scientific and technical programmes such as AIM, RACE, COST 219, SPRINT and TIDE, has also been interrogated by scientists wishing to obtain information connected with their research⁽⁴⁴⁾.

d) Information dissemination

The European system has promoted intra-Community exchanges between HANDYNET data collection and coordination centres.

In addition, collection of data for HANDYNET has been based on close cooperation between collection centres and users of the information, i.e. disabled people and also manufacturers, who are an indispensable source of information. In order to guarantee the comprehensiveness and quality of the data collected through a joint effort, some centres have carried out information campaigns for manufacturers. The French and Portuguese centres, respectively, conducted a mail campaign and held a conference at the Ajutec exhibition (Porto (P), December 1991).

Whenever HANDYNET is involved in international exhibitions on technical aids, the collection centres in the Member States in which the exhibitions are held are invited to organise the HELIOS-HANDYNET stand, which gives them more opportunity to meet users of information (disabled people, families, rehabilitation professionals, etc.) and manufacturers and distributors of technical aids.

With regard to the electronic message system and the newsletter, which are vital information and communication instruments, an initial installation at HANDYNET sites shows that there are no particular technical difficulties inherent in the product itself. The only likely problems are related to the poor quality of telecommunications networks in some Member States such as Spain, Portugal and Greece. Funding of the system could be divided up between the Commission (provision of software) and users (hardware and telecommunications).

On account of the new dimension introduced by CD-ROMs and the new contractual procedures which this implies for dissemination centres, it is not possible at the present time to speak of widespread direct access to the system. However, the collection centres, which are also responsible for dissemination of information, use the system to inform individuals or organisations which consult them.

The rate of consultation of the European data bank should increase significantly with the incorporation of images and graphics which allow a better representation of the technical aids analysed and selected. An initial application to categories of products such as wheelchairs, household aids or communication aids might be envisaged in the near future.

(43) Enquiries have come from the following countries: United States, Canada, Tunisia, South Africa, Switzerland, Austria, Finland, Norway, Israel, Russia, Czechoslovakia.

(44) Notably Professor Pier Luigi Emiliani, Institute for Research on Electromagnetic Waves, Firenze (I) and Doctor Stephens, School of Biological Science, Hampshire (UK).

e) Conclusions, future prospects

Despite some initial technical difficulties associated with the desire for a multilingual system, the speed of technological developments and the problem of compatibility between the European system and the various existing national data banks, the HANDYNET system entered an initial operational phase in 1991. The system was innovative in concept, design and organisation and there is no other system like it except in the United States, where only the content is comparable, since the ABLE-DATA data bank is monolingual. In addition to the market transparency which HANDYNET gives to individuals, organisations and manufacturers, the HANDYNET system's advantage is that it provides homogeneous data at European level and similar access procedures for various types of information.

HANDYNET encourages technical, economic and operational comparisons for the benefit of users - disabled people, their families and rehabilitation professionals. An added bonus of the European system is that it has developed a network of information centres within easy access of individuals, thereby reducing their isolation. There is also the possibility that the electronic message system may be extended to institutions or organisations in daily contact with disabled people to enable them to communicate amongst themselves.

The HANDYNET system is decentralised and flexible and European experts are on hand to give technical advice concerning the organisation of data collection and dissemination. Priority has been given during the past few years to developing the technical aids module, laying emphasis on the design of a module which now offers total transferability of the content of the organisations' file and of the procedure in the case of the other files. The structure of the organisations file is such that it can now be used to locate all organisations associated with disabled people. In addition, 4 000 addresses of sports organisations have been introduced into the system alongside information on manufacturers and retailers of technical aids. The experience acquired and the structures established now provide the basis for developing the system in other areas such as vocational training and employment, accessibility and transport, tourism, sport, recreational activities and the arts.

The dissemination of information to the disabled and people working with them will be given priority in the years to come. The information available should be accessible to all disabled people in as wide a range of forms as possible, often in combination with special interfaces, depending on the type of disability. Joint collection of data will continue and graphic image processing will soon be incorporated into the technical aids module.

Given the considerable economic implications of the HANDYNET system and its obvious benefits for disabled people, it has been the subject of much discussion. The system is perfectly adapted to the single market, promoting free movement and greater market transparency at European level.

3.2. Information and Documentation Service

3.2.1. Information activities

The aim of the information and documentation service was to help with the dissemination of information and transfer of knowledge relating to the activities of the HELIOS programme. The main methods used to achieve this objective have been the publication of a magazine, replies to individual information requests and participation in events concerning disabled people in the Member States.

The HELIOS magazine was intended to act as a link between the HELIOS programme and public opinion and, therefore, to raise public awareness of Community action in favour of disabled people as much as possible. This limited the possibility of providing information for those working with disabled people and for those involved in the HELIOS programme. In spite of the difficulties of publication in the nine Community languages and the fact that it is only published every three months, HELIOS has gained several thousand new readers. Three years after the magazine's launch there were 33 000 subscribers (free of charge), out of a total distribution of 40 000 copies. HELIOS had a varied readership whose expectations could not be fully met, given the limited number of pages (16) and a limited budget. The general presentation (headings, layout and editorial style) was finalised in 1990 and this resulted in an increase in subscription requests. In addition, the information service received numerous requests for additional information on articles which had appeared in the magazine (in particular on the results of questionnaires concerning disabled women and employment, mobility and transport and job placement). Readers also requested information on reports of training sessions, seminars and conferences organised under the HELIOS programme and new official Community texts concerning disabled people.

The information service also answered a large number of individual requests for general information on the HELIOS programme (approximately ten requests per day on average) by sending dossiers updated with the latest official European Community texts and documents drawn up by the service. The dossiers dealt with general aspects of the HELIOS programme, school integration, vocational rehabilitation and integration, social integration, the HANDYNET system and the HELIOS magazine. Replies were also given to requests for specific information on professional or university research, matters relating to a particular type of disability, national policies or a particular sector of activity. In these cases the information service cooperated with the documentation centre or with the competent experts appointed to assist the Commission. In addition, press releases were issued and a video produced on the innovative developments of the LMA network in the field of social integration.

Finally, the information service prepared for the Commission's participation in events directly concerning disabled people organised in the Member States by designing posters and display panels illustrating the programme's activities and areas in which disabled people were integrated.

3.2.2. Documentation centre

The documentation centre was created in 1988 to help the Community networks and the HANDYNET system with the task of disseminating knowledge and information on the activities and efforts undertaken in the Member States and by the Commission to improve the process of integration of disabled people. The documentation centre receives and holds various types of documents: directories of disabled people's institutions and organisations or services, product descriptions, tests or protocols relating to them, reports of conferences, seminars or meetings financed by the Commission, reports of European and also American and Canadian associations, monographs, journals, press reviews and various books on the subject of disability.

All these documents relate to legislation, economic, financial or statistical information and policies concerning disabled people. Requests for the documents, which follow the international Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) came primarily from the European Community and also from member countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and non-European countries.

A small percentage of requests came from disabled people, but a quarter of them came from organisations dealing with the disabled. Contacts were established with the Commission's information centres in the Member States. The documents available are distributed free of charge in response to written requests, phone calls or visits to the documentation centre. A more balanced distribution of information to the various Member States could be obtained if the dissemination of knowledge and research undertaken in the field of disability were better targeted and if lists of publications adapted to the requirements of the parties concerned were distributed automatically at regular intervals.

4 - PROMOTION OF A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY POLICY

4.1. Research

The main aim of the research undertaken under the HELIOS programme was to carry out a comparative analysis of integration of disabled people in the Member States and to help prepare the Commission's policy initiatives. The research may also help managers and those responsible at local, regional and national level and help set up activities in the field. They have also helped develop a theme-based approach in the case of certain activities. The respective objectives of the research were as follows:

- "The Centres of the Community Network as viewed through the national rehabilitation systems and the project common to all Member States for the global, coherent and continuous social and economic integration process of persons with disabilities" (1988 - Prof. A. Storm - B)
To update knowledge of the European network of rehabilitation centres following adoption of the HELIOS programme and also of national systems which seek to achieve socio-economic integration of the disabled.
- "The vocational rehabilitation of disabled women in the European Community" (1988 - Mrs Croxen John - UK)
To review and analyse, for the first time, the socio-economic situation of disabled women in the context of the development of an equal opportunities policy for men and women.
- "Income benefits and services: public social protection for handicapped persons in European Community countries" (1988 - Ministry for Social Affairs/RI-ECA - E)
To carry out a comparative analysis per Member State of the designation and assessment of disabilities and the economic benefits, provisions of services and social protection in the event of worker invalidity.
- "Occupational and leisure activities for people with profound retardation and multiple impairments" (1988 - Manchester University - UK)
To give an outline of the documentation (in English) available on the subject, develop a method of data collection and analyse some pilot projects in the United Kingdom, France and Germany.
- "New technology and education" (1988 - Mr Hustinx - B)
To examine the possibilities of integration of disabled children and young people in schools and their transition from school to the labour market with the aid of adaptable tools offered by new technology.
- "Moving to Independence - A report concerning EC initiatives to promote mobility and accessibility for disabled people" (1989 - ERICA - UK)
To contribute to the Commission's efforts to promote an environment in which disabled people may live independently. This study is part of the possible initiatives in the field of mobility, the creation of a European mobility card and access to buildings and public services.

- "Survey of the situation of deaf people in the Community" (1989 - D. Brien/British Deaf Association - UK)
To carry out for the first time a survey of the social and economic situation of people with a serious hearing disability and also of the education, training, employment and health of deaf people and the sign-language services available in the Member States.
- "Disabled persons: statistical data concerning the social situation of disabled people in six Member States" (1990/1991 - Stefan Grammenos/CESEP - B)
To obtain for the first time at Community level reliable and comparable statistics on the socio-economic situation of disabled people in the twelve Member States.
- "Sheltered employment in the European Community" (1991 - SAMOY/HIVA - B)
Consideration of the aims of sheltered employed and the Member States' policy in this area and evaluation of work programmes for severely disabled people.
- "Copyright for mentally handicapped artists" (1991 - UNAPEI - F)
To examine copyright and royalties for mentally handicapped artists on the basis of French law in order to find a solution applicable throughout the European Community.

Better use needs to be made of these studies in order that more of them may produce tangible results.

4.2. Policy Initiatives

4.2.1. Employment and vocational training

a) Origin and Community legal basis

The aim of the HELIOS programme was to "contribute to the implementation of Recommendation 86/379/EEC and of the Resolution of the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 21 December 1981"⁽⁴⁵⁾. The Resolution reaffirmed that "the Community and the Member States have a responsibility to promote better living and working conditions for handicapped people"⁽⁴⁶⁾. The Member States also agreed that it was necessary to "ensure that handicapped people do not shoulder an unfair burden of the effects, on both unemployment and resources, of economic difficulties"⁽⁴⁷⁾.

Recommendation 86/379/EEC was adopted on 24 July 1986 and concerned the employment of disabled people in the Community. This policy initiative recommended Member States to "take all appropriate measures to promote fair opportunities for disabled people in the field of employment and vocational training, including initial training and employment as well as rehabilitation and resettlement"⁽⁴⁸⁾. It also recommended them to "continue and, if necessary, intensify and re-examine their policies to help disabled people, where appropriate after consulting disabled people's organisations and both sides of industry; such policies should take account of measures and specific activities implemented in the other Member States which have proved effective and worthwhile", providing for the elimination of negative discrimination and for positive action for disabled people⁽⁴⁹⁾. For this purpose, the Recommendation invited the Member States to report to the Commission on the measures taken to implement it within two years of its adoption.

(45) Decision 88/231/EEC, Article 3(c), p. 40.

(46) Resolution 81/347/EEC, OJ No C 347 of 31 December 1981, third recital, p. 1.

(47) Resolution 81/347/EEC, paragraph 1, p. 2.

(48) Recommendation 86/379/EEC, OJ No L 225, p. 43, paragraph 1.

(49) Recommendation 86/379/EEC, paragraph 2.

b) Commission report on the application of the Recommendation on the employment of disabled people in the Community

In response to the Council's request, the Commission presented a report to the Member States⁽⁵⁰⁾ on 15 December 1988, the aim of which was to give an overall description of the situation in each Member State, identify the main features of national policies and place them in the context of Recommendation 86/379/EEC. The report also sought, with the aid of tables and on the basis of the guidelines of the Recommendation, to make a comparative analysis of national policies and identify any areas of convergence or divergence.

On the basis of the report it could be concluded that the Council Recommendation of 24 July 1986 had:

- contributed to a review of national measures on the basis of Community objectives,
- provided a reference framework for national measures being drawn up at the time of its adoption,
- and encouraged the Member States to introduce new measures in keeping with the Recommendation by identifying the main principles of a European policy.

c) Council's conclusions on the subject of employment of disabled people in the Community

On the basis of the abovementioned report, the Council adopted conclusions on the employment of disabled people in the Community⁽⁵¹⁾ on 12 June 1989. In its conclusions the Council considered that "the implementation, both at national and Community level, of programmes intended to encourage the process of insertion in the labour market and to improve the situation on the labour market for disabled people, is a basic requirement of an active social policy of a kind which will help to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the context of achieving the internal market"⁽⁵²⁾. Consequently, the Council invited the Commission to "develop measures to achieve a better knowledge of the social realities affecting disabled people and of their situation in relation to employment" and to "submit proposals in the field of employment which will ensure better coordination and greater consistency between the measures introduced by the Member States"⁽⁵³⁾.

4.2.2. Activities concerning school integration

The programme of European collaboration on the integration of handicapped children into ordinary schools, adopted by the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council of 14 May 1987⁽⁵⁴⁾, emphasises the need to continue working on the programme in the context of the first Community action programme for disabled people⁽⁵⁵⁾. In order to do this, the Council agreed to the Commission's proposal to renew the mandate of the working party on the integration of handicapped children into ordinary schools so that it could finalise the four-year programme and supervise its operation⁽⁵⁶⁾. Furthermore, the Council Decision establishing the HELIOS programme provides for "close coordination" between the two programmes⁽⁵⁷⁾ and also provides for the budget for implementation of the actions contained in the school integration programme. The HELIOS programme, therefore, constitutes the legal basis and the implementing instrument for Community policy for disabled people and is comprehensive and coherent.

(50) COM(88) 746 final.

(51) OJ No C 173/1 of 8 July 1989.

(52) Conclusions of the Council 89/C 173/01, paragraph 5.

(53) Conclusions 89/C 173/01, paragraphs 10 and 11(c).

(54) OJ No C 211 of 8 August 1987, p. 1.

(55) Third paragraph of the Conclusions of the Council of 14 May 1987.

(56) Sixth paragraph of the Conclusions of the Council of 14 May 1987.

(57) Council Decision 88/231/EEC of 18 April 1988, OJ No L 104 of 23 April 1988.

The policy initiatives in the field of school integration were prepared by means of activities undertaken at all levels, in local model activity networks and at seminars and conferences attended by disabled people and their representatives. A local model activity network in the field of school integration was set up under the responsibility of the Ministers of Education of the twelve Member States.

a) Integration of children and young people into ordinary systems of education

In accordance with the objectives and subjects contained in the programme of European collaboration in the field of school integration, the Commission organised the first European Conference on Handicap and Education in the context of the local model activity network in the field of school integration (Rotterdam, NL; 25-27 October 1989) in order to support measures undertaken in the Member States. The conference dealt with the following subjects:

- special systems and integrated situations,
- the learning environment,
- transition to the labour market.

The conclusions of the conference can be summed up as follows:

- the integration of disabled children in schools should be seen as an important and integral part of the drive for social integration of disabled people;
- the policy of integration is bringing about changes in school systems and the systems should develop further so as to enable all children to reach their individual potential;
- in the medium and long term, integrated situations and specialised establishments should be complementary and the choice of the children and parents of disabled children should be taken into account;
- cooperation should be developed, in the context of the HELIOS programme, amongst all the bodies caring for disabled children (teaching, vocational training, services dealing with the transition to working life, health and social services);
- the various educational possibilities afforded by new technologies should be explored.

On the basis of the conclusions of the Rotterdam Conference, the Irish Presidency of the Council presented in February 1990 a draft Resolution concerning integration of children and young people with disabilities into ordinary systems of education. The Resolution was adopted unanimously by the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council of 31 May 1990⁽⁵⁸⁾. It invited the Member States to make a particular effort and apply the necessary political will to implement pragmatic and tangible measures in close cooperation with specialised institutions. The Commission was also invited to draw up a report by July 1992 on the progress made to "encourage the formulation of comprehensive and coherent policies, with regard especially to the organisation of educational provision, the supply and management of resources, the monitoring and evaluation of integration schemes and the dissemination of good practices"⁽⁵⁹⁾. Finally, the Resolution specifies that the Commission, in cooperation with the Education Committee⁽⁶⁰⁾ and the working party on school integration⁽⁶¹⁾ set up under the HELIOS programme "will ensure that all the activities and programmes which it supports in the areas of education, training and youth policy and transition to adult and working life generally endeavour to take account of the special needs of people with disabilities who wish to participate in them"⁽⁶²⁾.

(58) OJ No C 162 of 3 July 1990, p. 2.

(59) See the report on the evaluation and progress of the school integration policy in the Member States.

(60) The Education Committee was set up by a Resolution of the Ministers of Education of 16 November 1971. Its task is to report to the Ministers of Education on all matters relating to cooperation in the field of education.

(61) See chapter 5.1.3 Structures established at Community level, p. 59.

(62) Resolution No C 162/90/02, p. 3, paragraph 8.

b) Teacher training and the involvement of parents in ordinary education

The subject of the second European Conference on Handicap and Education, held in Cagliari (I) on 25-27 October 1990, was "parents and teachers faced with integration". The following conclusions were drawn:

- scholastic achievement of all pupils depends on high-quality basic teacher training, incorporating modules on special education and the problems of young disabled people;
- a vital contribution is made by specialised teachers acting as technical advisers to teachers in ordinary education;
- parents should be offered guidance facilities to help prevent difficulties and provide advisory and monitoring services;
- parents' associations should be encouraged in order to ensure more active involvement of all parties involved.

On the basis of the conclusions of the Conference, the Luxembourg presidency of the Council drew up a draft Resolution on the training of teachers in integrated situations and the parents' role in ordinary education. The third recital of the draft Resolution reaffirms that the education and care of children and young people with disabilities in ordinary schools requires a comprehensive and coherent policy. The draft Resolution also recommends a series of measures designed to modify and improve teachers' initial or basic training so as to take more account of parent-child relationships, parent-teacher relationships and new technologies and techniques used in special education. The draft Resolution encourages greater cooperation with relevant institutions in the medical, social and recreational sectors and those which help prepare for working life and is intended to improve conditions for the acceptance of disabled children or young people in schools.

c) Other activities in the field of school integration

The administrators of the 21 local model activities in the school integration network made a substantial contribution to the transfer and dissemination of information and practices in accordance with the Council's conclusions of 14 May 1987 by means of study visits, thematic seminars and conferences organised at local, regional and national level. European disabled-persons' organisations also joined forces to draw up technical criteria providing a better response to the real needs of disabled pupils. These contributions have therefore had an influence or impact on the laws of the Member States, including:

- an increase in the number of special classes provided in ordinary schools in Greece (from 140 in 1988 to 520 in 1991),
- the adoption in December 1991 in France of a circular creating integrated classes and supplementing the circular on integration support networks and the completion of a national evaluation project by the Suresnes centre,
- the establishment in Portugal of a national plan to evaluate and adapt education systems with a view to integrating disabled children (Decree of 23 August 1991) following the initiative developed in Porto in cooperation with the Lisbon LMA,
- the contribution by the Irish LMA to a national education act currently being drawn up,
- the forthcoming preparation in Germany of a draft law on the possibilities of integration in ordinary education, based on the experience of the Bonn LMA.

All these initiatives attempt to improve the integration of disabled pupils into ordinary systems of education. In addition to specific Community technical cooperation activities, the Commission has undertaken other initiatives in the field of school integration. An education software module has been devised within the general structure of the HANDYNET system. Several studies financed by the Commission include a section devoted to the importance of disabled children and the type of education they receive. Coordinated action has also been developed within the Commission's departments (in particular with the Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth) to provide facilities for young disabled people in eight Community programmes⁽⁶³⁾. Finally, the Commission has established cooperation with international organisations in the field of school integration⁽⁶⁴⁾.

4.2.3. Mobility and transport

a) Origin and legal basis of the proposal for a Directive

The Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers was adopted on 9 December 1989 by eleven Member States of the Community⁽⁶⁵⁾. In its action programme for implementing the Charter⁽⁶⁶⁾, the Commission made a proposal for a Council Directive on improved mobility of workers with reduced mobility⁽⁶⁷⁾. This proposal for a Directive is also in keeping with the commitment expressed by the Commission in its proposal for the HELIOS programme Decision⁽⁶⁸⁾ to present policy initiatives in the field of mobility and transport for the disabled.

The European Parliament supported this initiative and, during its debates on the adoption of the HELIOS programme and the transport of disabled and elderly persons, expressed the wish that it should take the form of a Directive. The Council also adopted a Resolution concerning a Community action programme on the accessibility of transport to persons with reduced mobility⁽⁶⁹⁾ on 16 December 1991. The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (CEMT) also adopted a Resolution on the transport of persons with reduced mobility on 22 November 1990⁽⁷⁰⁾, which dealt in particular with access to buses, trains and coaches. The Resolution recommended to member countries of the CEMT (including the twelve Member States of the European Community) that all international regulations should take into account the needs of persons with reduced mobility. The Resolution also specified that vehicle and infrastructure facilities must be part of a global policy incorporating access to terminals and stations as well as the procedures for operating public transport, staff training and dissemination of information.

The Commission's proposal for a Directive supplements Community legislation in the field of health and safety at work of workers with reduced mobility. Disabled workers are one of the risk groups which employers are generally obliged to protect against risks which affect them specifically⁽⁷¹⁾: design of work places, accessibility of premises, internal transport and sanitary installations.

The Commission's action is restricted to workers with reduced mobility, since the legal basis of the proposal is Article 118a (EEC), which covers measures designed to eliminate or avert risks to the health and safety of workers at work. The text of the proposal does not cover the health and safety of workers at the work place, since the journey to and from work is considered to be included in the concept of the working environment. The proposal for a Directive is targeted at the specific risks to which workers with reduced mobility are exposed on their way to work.

(63) See chapter 4.5., p. 58.

(64) See chapter 4.6., p. 59.

(65) See Chapter 4.3., p. 52.

(66) Document COM(89) 568 final.

(67) COM(90) 588 final - SYN 327; OJ No C 68 of 16 March 1991, p. 7.

(68) Document COM(87) 342 final.

(69) OJ No C 18 of 24 January 1992,

(70) CEMT/CM(90) 21 final.

(71) Framework Directive 89/391/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work (OJ No L 183 of 29 June 1989, p. 1).

b) Content and enacting terms of the proposal for a Directive

The proposal concerns workers with reduced mobility, whatever the nature of their disability. In view of its legal basis, the proposal does not apply to the unemployed, students, schoolchildren, retired people and disabled people employed in sheltered workshops, who are not always considered as workers in all the Member States, but it does apply to trainees, apprentices and those undergoing vocational training.

The Commission's initiative provides that transport must be made available to workers with reduced mobility in such a way as to meet their special needs. This covers accessibility, facilities enabling workers with reduced mobility to travel safely, in particular accompanying measures to inform and train the persons concerned: familiarisation of the disabled worker with the technical aids for using means of transport or infrastructures, personalised assistance from transport staff, advice and information for the workers concerned.

The means of transport may be public transport, transport organised by the employer or special transport services for the disabled (public or private). The proposal also obliges Member States to ensure that workers with reduced mobility do not pay higher transport costs than other workers.

c) Implementation of the proposal for a Directive

The Commission is of the opinion that the proposal takes due account of the principle of subsidiarity, a particularly important aspect in the field of public transport which is organised at local or regional level in nearly all Member States. Consequently, the proposal for a Directive sets the objective to be attained and leaves each competent authority free to choose how to implement it, bearing in mind users' requirements.

The initiative provides that Member States must bring into force the necessary laws, regulations and administrative provisions by the end of 1992 and must present a timetable for the implementation of the measures by the end of 1999. This timetable seems reasonable, given that the majority of public transport equipment is renewed in general every ten years and that there is a tendency to replace present equipment by equipment which takes into account the special requirements of people with reduced mobility.

The Annex to the proposal contains minimum requirements which means of transport made available to workers with reduced mobility must meet. This does not mean that all means of transport must be totally adapted, but that there must be a sufficient number and frequency of services and appropriate transport schedules.

With regard to the introduction of specially adapted means of transport and the relevant accompanying measures, the Commission will present to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee a report on the progress made in implementing the Directive by 31 December 1996, as part of the general report on the implementation of the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers.

4.3 Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers

a) Developments

At the meeting of the European Council in Strasbourg on 8 and 9 December 1989, the Heads of State or Government of 11 Member States of the European Community adopted the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers⁽⁷²⁾. A vital component of the social dimension of the construction of Europe, the Charter establishes a basic set of social rights which must be guaranteed and implemented at national or Community level as appropriate. Since completion of the internal market is liable to increase the vulnerability of certain groups of persons, the Charter contains an important provision relating to the disabled. Article 26 states that:

"All disabled persons, whatever the origin and nature of their disablement, must be entitled to additional concrete measures aimed at improving their social and professional integration. These measures must concern, in particular, according to the capacities of the beneficiaries, vocational training, ergonomics, accessibility, mobility, means of transport and housing."

The Charter is a solemn declaration and as such does not change the existing legal situation. A programme of action for implementation of the Charter has therefore been prepared by the Commission, incorporating 47 initiatives aimed at the effective implementation of the rights which come within the Community's area of competence⁽⁷³⁾. On the subject of action for the disabled, item 13 makes provision for:

- further development of the HANDYNET system;
- a proposal for a Council Directive on the introduction of measures aimed at promoting an improvement in the travel conditions of workers with motor disabilities;
- a proposal for a Council Decision establishing the third Community action programme for disabled people (HELIOS) for the period 1992-96.

Article 29 of the Charter also requires the Commission of the European Communities to establish each year a report on the application of the Charter by the Member States and the Commission. Adopted by the Commission in December 1991, the first report described activities at both Community and national level⁽⁷⁴⁾.

b) Positive Community Influence

Initiatives within the Community's area of competence include the following:

- On 18 December 1989 the Council agreed to continue with the HANDYNET system.
- On 11 February 1991 the Commission presented a proposal for a Directive on minimum requirements to improve the mobility and the safe transport to work of workers with reduced mobility⁽⁷⁵⁾.
- On 2 October 1991 the Commission adopted a proposal for a Decision establishing a third Community action programme to assist disabled people (HELIOS II (1992-1996))⁽⁷⁶⁾.

(72) The United Kingdom has not subscribed to the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers

(73) Communication from the Commission on its action programme relating to the implementation of the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers, COM(89) 568 final, Brussels, 29 November 1989

(74) First report on the application of the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers, COM(91) 511 final, Brussels, 5 December 1991

(75) COM(90) 588 final - SYN 327, OJ No C 68 of 16 March 1991

(76) COM(91) 350 final, Brussels, 23 October 1991

c) Positive national influence

As far as the situation in the Member States is concerned, the rights contained in the Charter are generally guaranteed by national constitutions or legislation, collective conventions or international conventions ratified by the Member States⁽⁷⁷⁾. Legislation and regulations may be reformed, and policies benefiting the disabled at national level may be developed to achieve the objectives laid down in the Charter. The following are but a few examples.

- In the specific context of the unified Germany, new rules on disabled persons were drawn up as part of the Treaty establishing monetary, economic and social union, coming into effect in the eastern Länder on 1 July 1990. As a result, a network of general infrastructures designed to promote the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons is now being set up, and various social measures benefiting the severely disabled are gradually being implemented.
- In Greece, recent ministerial decrees⁽⁷⁸⁾ have been designed to encourage the employment of disabled persons by assuming part of the cost of adapting workstations or by various subsidy programmes.
- In France, a multiannual programme has been set up to give new impetus to the sheltered employment sector and to open up sheltered structures to the outside world. An employment plan for the disabled was announced at the Council of Ministers on 10 April 1991 and is designed to facilitate access for the disabled to training facilities, give priority to the disabled in the allocation of "solidarity jobs", and encourage the employment of disabled persons in the civil service.
- In Italy, Law No 486/1968 on the obligation to allocate a specific proportion of jobs to disabled persons is currently being amended.

A major effort has also been made in recent years to improve accessibility, housing and services for persons with reduced mobility. Fare concessions for public transport are available in most countries, as are tax benefits particularly in connection with access to housing. Various provisions cover access to buildings and public places⁽⁷⁹⁾, and specific measures have been adopted in the Member States to facilitate access to technical aids.

b) Conclusions and future prospects

The principles set out in the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers reflect a resolve to introduce and develop a set of minimum social provisions common to all Member States.

Without imposing any obligation on the Member States, the Charter recommends the adoption of measures aimed at improving the social and vocational integration of the disabled. The first report on implementation of the Social Charter, dated December 1991, takes stock of the various provisions adopted in the Member States in the field of vocational training, accessibility, mobility, means of transport and housing.

The Commission has also compiled with the programme of action which it established for itself in 1989, by presenting all the programme's proposals over the past two years.

(77) International Labour Organisation Convention No 139 covers the occupational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons

(78) Decree No 30052 of 24 January 1991 of the Minister of Labour and Joint Decree No 30993 of 27 March 1991 of the Ministers of Finance and Labour

(79) One specific example is the programme on improving accessibility, adopted on 21 November 1990

4.4 Initiatives and programmes directly involving the disabled

4.4.1 The HORIZON Initiative

a) Developments

On 18 July 1990, in the context of the structural Funds, the Commission decided to establish three Community human resources initiatives for the period 1991-1993. These were named EUROFORM, NOW and HORIZON. The HORIZON initiative is more specifically concerned with the disabled and certain other disadvantaged groups such as the long-term unemployed, young persons with inadequate training, and persons confronted with a new socio-economic situation. Its aim is to improve their conditions of access to the job market by transnational measures. The initial breakdown of funding allocated 70% to projects relating to or involving the disabled and 30% to projects concerning disadvantaged groups.

In accordance with the provisions adopted with the reform of the structural Funds, to be eligible under the HORIZON initiative measures must be incorporated into operational programmes or global grants. The main guidelines are contained in Communication C 327/05⁽⁸⁰⁾, which was addressed to the Member States in December 1990.

Financial support from the structural Funds is made available for specific measures relating to the vocational training and employment of persons with a physical or mental disability. It may also be granted for adapting infrastructures to cater for the specific needs of such persons. Action to benefit the disabled is eligible only where the transnational partnership includes at least one partner from an Objective 1 region, i.e. the less developed regions of the Community.

The HORIZON initiative represents a new venture, for both the Commission and the Member States. Since 1991 the main initiative management mechanisms have gradually been installed, a guide has been published in all Community languages, and national coordinators have been appointed in all Member States. The very high level of demand and the relative paucity of the available resources has obliged the Member States to introduce a selection process.

The operational programmes which Member States have submitted to the European Social Fund are generally designed to complement the HELIOS programme and HANDYNET system. The "disabled-persons" component of the HORIZON initiative clearly supplements the HELIOS programme, particularly in the field of vocational training and employment for the disabled. Close cooperation has also been established between the HELIOS programme and the HORIZON initiative, ensuring a regular two-way flow of information. The HELIOS programme participants looking for transnational partners during the launching phase of a HORIZON project have thus been able to benefit from support from experts assisting the Commission in connection with the HELIOS programme, disabled persons' organisations and, when they were appointed, the national coordinators for the initiative. The ESF also committed itself to part-funding staff training projects, particularly for the HANDYNET data collection centres.

The HORIZON initiative provides financial support for projects likely to yield results which can be exploited not only by the national partners, but also by the members of the networks set up under the HELIOS programme. It also gives priority to encouraging the transfer of know-how and experience to the Community regions whose development is lagging behind.

Furthermore, HORIZON offers the members of the Community networks the possibility of a useful extension of the transnational relations established in the course of the HELIOS programme within their network, between networks, and sometimes even with external partners.

As regards the network of vocational training and rehabilitation centres and experiments, the proposals for HORIZON projects related mainly to:

- training programmes for persons in various disability categories or with a specific disability;
- training of instructors;
- counselling, placement and employment of persons with a mental disability or illness;
- transition from sheltered employment to normal employment.

One example worthy of mention is transnational cooperation between Pengwern Hall (UK), Theotokos (GR), the Fondazione pro Juventute (I) and the Centro de Educação e Formação Profissional Integrada de Porto (P), aimed at developing a computerised information service.

Within the school integration network, the LMAs established at Valladolid and Oviedo (E), Hinnerup (DK) and Leuven (B) are planning to continue their work on vocational training and the training of instructors under the umbrella of a HORIZON project. Similarly, the Suresnes (F) and Lisbon (P) LMAs have submitted a joint project for training instructors in new technologies applied in the context of hearing impairments.

LMAs on economic integration seek to develop transnational projects involving the practical application of innovatory experiments in the fields of vocational training, distance learning or economic integration for the physically or mentally disabled. For example, the LMAs in Patras (GR), Hannover (D) and Silkeborg (DK) are collaborating on improving their know-how concerning new technologies and preparation of the visually disabled (in particular) for employment. The aim of the Tullamore (IRL) and Dordrecht (NL) LMAs is to promote in-company training for persons with a mental disability.

As far as the social integration LMA network is concerned, a distinction must be made between three types of project:

- improvement of public infrastructures taking account of the specific needs of all disabled persons (physical, sensory and mental disabilities and mental illnesses),
- training of officials and staff members dealing with various categories of disabilities;

The LMAs in Alava (E), Luxembourg (L) and Val de Marne (F) have submitted a project for training staff working on the independence and social integration of persons suffering from a mental disability or illness.

- development of an overall integration process (economic and social aspects), with the emphasis on training and the creation of SMEs to boost employment of the disabled; the LMAs in Bordeaux (F), Salamanca (E) and Rhodes (GR) are specifically concerned with training in new technologies to allow persons with a physical or sensory disability to find employment.

Transnational projects have also been designed in connection with HANDYNET collection coordination or information centres. The main objective of such projects is to train the staff of these centres in:

- use of the HANDYNET system;
- design of a methodology to assess the information requirements of disabled persons;
- implementation of information and counselling infrastructures and networks;
- dissemination of information to the disabled and persons working in the field;
- implementation of a marketing strategy aimed at manufacturers.

A good example here is the cooperation between the collection coordination centres in Spain, France and Greece.

b) Conclusions and future prospects

The transnational projects selected under the HORIZON initiative are mainly designed to encourage the exchange of training programmes, instructors and trainees, thus providing for a transfer of know-how between Member States. The role of the national coordinators in this context is to ensure the transfer of results at national level, with the assistance of the competent regional or local authorities.

It should be stressed that the HELIOS programme represents the legal basis approved by the Council for Community action for the disabled. An inter-service group was created within the Commission on 2 October 1991 to assume responsibility for internal coordination of the different Community programmes, measures and initiatives relating to the disabled.

HORIZON projects also help to achieve the objectives of the HELIOS programme and encourage the development of an overall Community policy based on the most successful experiments and innovative approaches in the Member States. In this connection, real synergy should be developed between the HELIOS programme and the HORIZON initiative so as to make full and effective use of the fact that they are complementary to each other. For example, transnational exchanges under the HORIZON initiative should be more fully integrated into the Community networks and the external network of the next HELIOS programme. Similarly, the Commission, in conjunction with the Member States and disabled-persons' organisations, will be able to develop certain themes of the HELIOS II programme by taking account of the results obtained in the context of the HORIZON initiative.

4.4.2 Other activities conducted by the European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) helps disabled workers by providing them with the basis for attaining financial independence like any other worker, thus allowing them to integrate or reintegrate into the world of employment. The corresponding provisions are part of the new general rules governing the European Social Fund, which entered into force in 1989, and cover support for routine intervention in favour of rehabilitation structures, as well as measures geared to specific situations - the latter serving to reinforce national operations relating to the vocational training and employment of disabled persons.

Since the reform of the Community structural Funds, the ESF, among others, has been involved in attempts to improve synergy and results. The new rules governing the ESF make special provision for the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons, who are covered by priority measures under the Community Support Frameworks established in 1989 to combat long-term unemployment and encourage the vocational integration of young people. The "disabled" component alone has been allocated around half of the ECU 804 million earmarked for the categories with special difficulties on the job market (women, migrants and the disabled), the precise amount being ECU 411 million under Objectives 3 and 4 of the Fund, outside the scope of Objective 1 (1990-1992). The disabled persons component under Objective 1 has been allocated a total of ECU 262 million for the period 1989-1993. Taking all regions and Objectives together, the sum of ECU 673 million is therefore to be made available by the ESF for the benefit of the disabled in the Member States between 1989 and 1993.

4.4.3 The TIDE Initiative

TIDE, the Technology Initiative for Disabled and Elderly people in Europe, was launched by the Commission (Directorate-General "Telecommunications, Information Industries and Innovation") in collaboration with a multidisciplinary team of independent European experts⁽⁸¹⁾. A pilot phase was scheduled for 1991 and 1992 with a view to assessing the feasibility of the initiative and the need for a follow-up in the form of a more complete set of measures.

Its aims are to encourage the creation of a single market in rehabilitation technologies in Europe and to ensure coordination and cooperation between research centres, users' organisations and companies operating in this field in Europe.

Its ultimate objective is to facilitate access for disabled and/or elderly persons to telecommunications services, information technologies and advanced technologies giving them control of their environment, which should allow them to lead a more independent and less isolated life.

The TIDE initiative also seeks to establish links with other Community measures for the disabled. For example, most of the independent experts who assisted with the preparation of the initiative also helped to design the COST 219 project on "future telecommunications and teleinformatics services and equipment for the disabled", the participants in which cover 16 Community and EFTA countries. Collaboration is also gradually being established between the experts responsible for TIDE and HELIOS, through joint meetings and informal contacts.

4.5 Other Community programmes, measures and initiatives taking into account the needs of the disabled

HELIOS is not the only Community programme to consider the needs of the disabled. Many programmes, measures and initiatives covering various aspects of life, particularly health, education, vocational training, housing and mobility, offer substantial aid to help disabled persons improve their situation and quality of life.

Although there are no formal links between HELIOS and the various other programmes, spontaneous mutual support has been in evidence. Two examples in particular are worthy of mention.

-A large number of school integration LMAs have participated in exchanges under the ARION programme, making it possible for members of the LMAs to undertake additional study visits, whilst some LMAs have explained their activities to invited ARION participants, who have then been able to transfer the results obtained under the HELIOS programme to the school environment.

-One third of school integration LMAs are in contact with the ERASMUS programme: many institutes of higher education have participated simultaneously in the ERASMUS European university network and the LMA local coordination committees, stimulating reflection on the integration of disabled students in higher education. Furthermore, the subject of "teacher training" has been studied in depth by a number of LMAs and recognised as an area of study in ERASMUS, thus benefiting the training of specialists in the field of education for disabled pupils.

Documentation on Community programmes, measures and initiatives able to provide appropriate assistance has been supplied to the LMAs when requested. The European disabled-persons' organisations have on a large number of occasions asked to be informed systematically of the possibilities of participation for their members, with a view to bringing their participation to a more equitable level.

(81) DG XIII, TIDE pilot measure, plan of work, Doc. No 467/1/90 dated 12 February 1991

Barriers which are difficult for the disabled to overcome seem to exist at both Community and national level and need to be analysed so that those responsible for the programmes can be made aware of the specific needs of the disabled and consideration can be given to measures designed to facilitate their participation.

On 2 October 1991, in order to stimulate more dynamic and systematic cooperation between HELIOS and the various Community programmes, measures and initiatives for the disabled, the Commission decided to set up an inter-service group⁽⁸²⁾ (under the authority of the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Industrial Relations) to:

- ensure internal coordination of the different Community programmes, measures and initiatives for the disabled;
- improve the transparency and dissemination of information on these activities outside the Commission.

Synergy between these different Community programmes could intensify their impact in all domains of life for the disabled and lead to a more comprehensive and coherent integration policy.

4.6 Cooperation with international organisations

4.6.1 Council of Europe

As a result of the agreement reached on 16 June 1987 between the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the President of the Commission of the European Communities, relations have been established at different levels:

- a Council of Europe representative is invited to attend meetings of the HELIOS Liaison Group as an observer;
- a Commission representative is invited to meetings of the Council of Europe's committee on the rehabilitation and integration of disabled persons;
- a HELIOS programme expert attends meetings of the Council of Europe on the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH), whilst a member of the Council of Europe's committee of experts attends meetings of the HANDYNET classifications study group.

Commission representatives also participated in the conference organised in Paris on 7-8 November 1991 on "Independent Living for People with Disabilities", which was attended by ministers from the 25 member countries of the Council of Europe and representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe. Delegates from the United Nations, UNESCO, the ILO, OECD, Albania, Bulgaria, Canada, Estonia, the Vatican, Latvia, Poland, Romania and the USSR (now Commonwealth of Independent States) also attended as observers. At the end of the proceedings the Ministers of the 25 member countries of the Council of Europe⁽⁸³⁾ adopted a final declaration stressing the need for a coherent overall policy covering all aspects of a disabled person's life.

(82) COM(91) M/in 1076

(83) Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom

4.6.2 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

a) European Conference of Ministers of Transport

This is an international body embracing 19 European countries, four associate member countries and three countries with observer status⁽⁸⁴⁾.

The ad hoc working party on transport for persons with reduced mobility, which comprises delegates from the member countries, has been meeting regularly since 1985. Its programme of work consists of the study of problems and dissemination of information on methods of providing the disabled with appropriate means of transport. Five seminars have been organised, the proceedings of which have been published by the Conference. Furthermore, three major reports have been prepared on the basis of the working party's research and directives on the creation of pedestrian zones. The resulting reports, resolutions and recommendations were approved by the Ministers of Transport at their meetings in 1985, 1987 and 1989.

The European Conference of Ministers of Transport invited the Commission to participate in the activities of the ad hoc working party, which in the course of the HELIOS programme studied a large number of subjects related to the mobility of handicapped persons, means of transport, the accessibility thereof, and the accessibility of their infrastructure.

The end result was the Conference's adoption, on 22 November 1990, of a Resolution on the transport requirements of the disabled, with specific reference to buses, trains and coaches, including the corresponding infrastructures.

The conclusions of this Resolution tie in perfectly with the amended proposal for a Directive on the mobility and transport of workers with reduced mobility, as transmitted by the Commission to the Council.

b) School Integration

Finally, the Commission is also involved in work under the auspices of the OECD on the subject of "an active life for disabled young people - school integration". The intention is to prepare a report on school integration on the basis of specific cases selected by experts in the member countries of the OECD.

(84) Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and Yugoslavia. The associate members are Australia, Canada, Japan and the United States. In 1989 Hungary, Morocco and Poland were granted observer status.

5 - STRUCTURES ESTABLISHED AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

5.1 Bodies Instituted in accordance with Council Decisions

5.1.1 Advisory Committee

Set up under Article 6 of the Council Decision of 18 April 1988 establishing the HELIOS programme, the Advisory Committee consists of two government representatives per Member States. Its task is to deliver an opinion on measures to be taken under the programme. The Advisory Committee, which has met twelve times, has been briefed and asked to give an opinion on the activities planned according to the programme, the proposal for a Directive on mobility and transport, implementation of changes to the Community's HORIZON initiative, the HANDYNET system and the establishing of the HELIOS II programme. The Member States have thus contributed to the application of the programme through their representation on the Advisory Committee.

5.1.2 Liaison Group

Set up under Article 7 of the Council Decision of 18 April 1988 establishing the HELIOS programme, the Liaison Group consists of the government representatives on the Advisory Committee and nine representatives of disabled people or their families appointed by the Commission on the basis of proposals from organisations (preferably with a European dimension) and one representative each of employers' and employees' organisations, appointed by the Commission on the basis of proposals from organisations representing those interests at Community level.

The Commission asks for the Liaison Group's opinion before contacting the Advisory Committee, particularly as regards the priority to be given to the programme objectives. The Liaison Group, which has met 13 times, has been consulted not only on measures to be taken and activities planned under the HELIOS programme, but also on Commission initiatives or events likely to have direct or indirect consequences for the disabled. Examples include the European driving licence, VAT rates, reform of the structural Funds, unification of Germany, compiling of comparable statistics on the social situation of disabled persons in the Member States, coordination of Community programmes in the field of new technologies, measures to increase public awareness through the media, and sheltered employment in the European Community.

5.1.3 "School Integration" working party

The "School Integration" working party was established on the basis of the conclusions of the Council of Education Ministers meeting within the Council of 3 June 1984 (item IV.B.3).

Consisting of national experts and persons responsible for disabled integration policy, the working party was given an ongoing mandate to consider and exchange opinions on the main problems of the integration of the disabled into school systems.

Further conclusions were adopted by the Council on 14 May 1987 concerning a programme of European collaboration on the integration of handicapped children into ordinary schools (87/C211/01), which made provision for a four-year programme of collaboration and exchange at European level, through which the Commission was to support action taken in the Member States. The programme also contained a list of research themes. At the end of the programme the Commission was to present a report on progress in the Member States and on the programme of collaboration and exchange at Community level.

Article 4(e) of the Decision of 18 April 1988 establishing the HELIOS programme, which took effect retroactively as from 1 January 1988, makes provision for close coordination with the European cooperation programme on the integration of handicapped children into ordinary schools. As a result, work undertaken on the basis of the 1987 conclusions has been incorporated into the overall policy adopted under the HELIOS programme.

With this policy in mind, the objectives of the HELIOS school integration group have been to:

- stimulate coordination at different levels within the national authorities of the Member States;
- help establish and monitor local model activities within the school integration network;
- participate in specific measures included in the 1987 programme, including European conferences.

The "School Integration" group met 13 times during the course of the HELIOS programme and was briefed and consulted on all activities connected with education (basic activities, conferences, seminars, cooperation with other Community programmes relating to education, HANDYNET system, legislation proposals and initiatives).

Finally, in accordance with the Decision establishing the HELIOS programme and the Resolution of 31 May 1990, a questionnaire was prepared and approved by the working party to serve as a guide for the national contributions to be drafted by the government experts on the progress of school integration in each Member State. The Commission has not yet received all the national contributions which were to be incorporated into this report.

5.2. Working parties instituted by the Commission

5.2.1 Dialogue Group

The European non-governmental organisations which are members of the Dialogue Group met five times in the course of the HELIOS programme. During the same period the number of international and European NGOs increased sharply, from 19 in 1988 to 30 in 1991.

The Dialogue Group, set up by the Commission in December 1988, was kept informed about the implementation of the HELIOS programme and cooperation with NGOs. At each meeting each NGO was able to present the activities planned for the following year and obtain information on the activities of the others. Special attention was devoted to preparing political initiatives and deciding the priorities for cooperation between the Commission and disabled organisations.

The NGOs were asked to assist with the compiling of a statistical study on the socio-economic situation of disabled persons and a study of sheltered employment in the twelve Member States.

The members of the Dialogue Group played an important part in preparing the proposal for HELIOS II. They were asked for specific proposals, which were largely adopted by the Commission.

5.2.2 "Employment of the disabled" working party

This working party has monitored the application in the Member States of the Council Recommendation of 24 July 1986 on the employment of disabled people in the Community (86/379/EEC). Consisting of a government expert per Member State, it met three times in 1988 and in 1990 participated in the work related to the European conference in Hannover (D; LMA II network - economic integration) and in 1991 in the work for the European conference in Erfurt/Weimar (D; network of training and vocational rehabilitation centres and experiments).

5.2.3 "Mobility and Transport" working party

In accordance with the Commission's 1990 programme of action for implementation of the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers and the wishes of the European Parliament, the Commission drew up a proposal for measures, in the form of a Directive, to improve the mobility and transport of persons with reduced mobility.

After consulting the Advisory Committee and the Liaison Group, the Commission set up a Working Party on Mobility and Transport under the HELIOS programme.

The Working Party met twice (on 17 October and 13 November 1990) to consider a draft Directive on the mobility and transport of persons with reduced mobility.

Consisting of government experts from the Transport Ministries of the twelve Member States, the Working Party expressed a favourable opinion on the draft Directive. In drawing up the proposal for a Directive adopted on 6 February 1991, the Commission took the fullest possible account of the opinions and comments of the Working Party members.

5.2.4 HANDYNET Technical Coordination Group

This Group was set up by the Commission pursuant to the Advisory Committee's opinion dated 11 October 1989. Consisting of disability and computer experts from the twelve Member States, i.e. potential users of the HANDYNET system in the field, the Group's task is to analyse technical problems arising in connection with the system, design suitable solutions and report to the Advisory Committee. The Group has met six times and without any doubt has helped to give the HANDYNET system more impetus and improve its efficiency by ensuring active collaboration on the part of the Member States.

6 - CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the HELIOS programme was to encourage cooperation and coordination between innovatory activities to help the disabled throughout the Community. This report has attempted to examine the extent to which the programme has allowed an approach to be defined and all the available resources to be implemented so as to ensure partnership between all the parties involved in the integration of the disabled. The measures and initiatives likely to contribute towards realising this approach and using the resources have included technical cooperation at Community level, political initiatives, and the research, information and awareness measures provided for by the Decision establishing the HELIOS programme. All these measures and initiatives were also designed to help foster extensive innovation in various forms and permit the acquisition and improvement of knowledge on the part of the programme participants through the sharing and dissemination of the results of their work both within their own countries and in the rest of the Community.

The HELIOS programme has proved very beneficial as far as vocational training and rehabilitation, economic integration, social integration and independent living for the disabled are concerned. Activities and projects in the field of technical cooperation have helped make it possible to develop a Community approach based on the most successful innovatory measures in the Member States. The diversity of solutions and possibilities has been exploited in order to achieve school, economic and social integration for the disabled and help them become more independent. The Council Recommendation of 24 July 1986 has been followed up in practice in numerous areas of economic and vocational integration through the application of equal treatment in respect of access to training and employment, the organisation of work, placement, the transitional role of sheltered establishments and the creation of jobs using new technologies. For the first time, the disabled and their families have been able to take part in Community-level activities via European representative organisations which have organised a large number of activities covering all disability categories. Furthermore, Community technical cooperation activities have helped to combat the specific difficulties faced by disabled women seeking access to employment and by persons caring for disabled children or adults at home.

Numerous local initiatives have been reproduced by or successfully transferred to all the Member States, either in the same form or by adapting them to the local context. Participation in the HELIOS programme has thus made it possible to introduce useful experiments or practices, recognise similar problems in the Member States and in some cases carry out pioneer work, particularly in the context of specific measures concerning independent living and creative, sporting and leisure activities. Furthermore, the conditions of operation of institutions concerned with rehabilitation and integration and the training of their staff have been made easier through activities developed at Community level, especially study visits and training sessions. A number of successful experiments have also resulted in amendments to legislation or national, regional or local regulations.

However, interaction between the Community networks, institutions forming part of the external network and disabled-persons' organisations should be improved by involving them all in the preparations for work on specific themes, in the context of concrete and precise objectives. Continuous and independent evaluation is necessary, in cooperation with the responsible national authorities, in order to exploit to the full all the resources which have come to light as a result of implementation of the HELIOS programme. It should be possible to replace activities which have given unsatisfactory results, are of little interest at Community level or do not make it possible to plan and design efficient integration policies. With this in mind, the Commission could establish new, more stringent participation criteria for Community technical cooperation, in order to avoid major imbalances in participation. Furthermore, full exploitation of the results of the HELIOS programme implies making available sufficient resources to disseminate information and the results of experiments. In this connection, precise responsibilities should be laid down at local, national and Community level. Information on the activities of each participant should be made more widely available in the Member States so that all the HELIOS partners and institutions concerned can benefit. The Member States could provide assistance by organising regular meetings at national level, whilst the European disabled-persons' organisations could help with the wider, coordinated dissemination of HELIOS programme information and results on the basis of disability category or area of integration.

A specific contribution of the HELIOS programme has been to show up the diversity of approaches to integration and the necessity of a coherent overall policy taking account of all needs, expectations and aspects of the life of disabled persons. Community-level activities have sometimes revealed gaps or shortcomings in national regulations or legislation and have sometimes given birth to new legal, economic or social provisions. Furthermore, the diversity of programmes, measures and initiatives which have been implemented by the Commission and take account of the interests of the disabled should be better exploited and coordinated to increase the positive influence of the Community on the overall situation of the disabled. In this connection, there is a degree of similarity, complementarity and scope for synergy between activities both within and outside the European Social Fund framework (HORIZON initiative and HELIOS programme), and this should be developed.

The dissemination of useful information for the disabled, their relatives and people working in the field should be regarded as an essential priority. In this respect, the computerised HANDYNET system should in the near future make information on technical aids for all disability categories accessible to the disabled in the nine Community languages. In fact, after initial technical difficulties due to the number of languages, technological developments and compatibility of the system with existing national data banks, the HANDYNET system entered a first operational phase in 1991. The economic implications resulting from the scope for technical, economic or functional comparison provided by HANDYNET for the disabled, their families and rehabilitation workers emphasise its importance as a European information network for the disabled in the context of the Single Market.

The HELIOS programme illustrates the continuity of Community measures for the disabled pursuant to the Council Resolution of 21 December 1981. It has helped to establish the conditions necessary for the integration of the disabled and to create synergy and knock-on effects in the Member States. Its overall efficiency and coherence could be improved by extending its scope to areas of integration which have not been given sufficient consideration, including prevention of disabilities, early intervention, the elderly disabled, functional rehabilitation, integration in nursery schools and universities, continuing training, health education, promotion of applied research on disabilities, accessibility of employment, and communication barriers, etc. Community measures for the disabled could also continue to involve all those concerned and to define appropriate policies, thus providing concrete help for the Member States in establishing measures to improve the situation of the disabled more rapidly.