

# helios

flash 8

## National information days

An essential aim of the HELIOS programme is to identify the most innovative and effective experience and practice with a view to facilitating the integration of disabled people and promoting equal opportunities in the various EU countries. Exchange and information activities (AEIs) involving the partners designated by the Member State governments are implemented as a means of achieving that goal. Furthermore, the Commission finances a number of activities staged by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on a European scale.

At European level, therefore, a range of meetings and conferences organised under the HELIOS programme provide an opportunity for extensive information exchange. But the results and conclusions of these meetings must be publicised and used as widely as possible. Dissemination, or the transfer of know-how, is needed both between and within the countries of the EU, down to regional and local level.

As part of this process, several documents are due to be published in early 1995: the reports of the review seminars on the four AEI sectors and the reports drawn up by the European NGOs on their respective sectors.

It is up to the Member States to ensure that know-how is transferred at national and local level. The HELIOS programme helps them in this by providing financial assistance for national information meetings on HELIOS. The organisation of these meetings and the form they take, however, are matters for the national representatives within the HELIOS programme and the national disability councils (or representative national NGOs in countries without such councils).

National HELIOS meetings are scheduled to take place at least once a year in each Member State, and usually under the title of national HELIOS information days. They are an ideal forum for all those involved at national level: partners in AEIs in the four sectors, NGOs, HANDYNET centres, national officials and ministerial representatives, politicians, etc.

The form the information days take differs from one country to another, but national participants in the exchange and information activities are always invited. The organisers may arrange a preparatory meeting for each sector to review the work in hand; sometimes these sectoral meetings are held after the national HELIOS day. National NGOs are usually invited together with, in some cases, representatives of the HANDYNET centres, enabling partners from the three strands of the programme to meet and exchange ideas. Some countries also extend the invitation to policy-makers and even the press.

A number of countries take advantage of the national HELIOS information days to organise other events around the same date. In Luxembourg, for instance, the information day was preceded by a two-day study visit involving partners from other European countries, and a European seminar on the links between psychiatry and learning difficulties - in all, a full four days of meetings under the heading "European HELIOS II week in Luxembourg".

Representatives of the Commission and the HELIOS team of experts are usually invited, and can give practical information on the programme and a general review of the progress made. ▶

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# HELIOS competition

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It is also a chance to hear informal comments and assessments from the HELIOS partners. In addition, the organisers of the national days can obtain brochures and documents on the programme from the information service of the HELIOS team of experts.

15 information days have or will be held this year. Further details on the results and dates for 1995 are available from your national representatives on the HELIOS Advisory Committee.

**National HELIOS information days organised in 1994:**

**Belgium:**

*French- and German-Speaking Communities:* 24 November

*Flemish Community:* 16 January 1995

**Denmark:** 19 January and 8 November

**Germany:** 25 January

**Greece:** 19 January, 29-30 June and 20 December

**Spain:** 24 October

**France:** 27 September

**Ireland:** 31 May and 16 September

**Luxembourg:** 29 September

**Netherlands:** 20 June

**Portugal:** 7 October

**United Kingdom:** 16 March

The Council decision establishing the HELIOS programme provides for measures to raise the awareness of the general public, and in particular the organisation of competitions and annual prizes for model projects in the various fields relating to the integration of disabled people.

A European panel of judges was to be formed to set competition criteria and select the prize-winners. Following consultation of the Advisory Committee and the European Disability Forum, the Commission appointed the panel in accordance with geographical criteria, but also taking care to ensure adequate representation of all forms of disability and fields of integration.

One advantage of the HELIOS competitions is that they will contribute to promoting innovative and effective practice and transferring know-how at European and national level. The judges will also be involved in drawing up good practice guides on the basis of information available through the HELIOS programme, so the prize-winning projects could serve to illustrate the principles which the partners set out in the guides.

HELIOS competitions will be held in 1995 and 1996. The prize-giving ceremonies should coincide with the European Day of Disabled Persons to be held on 3 December each year.

The organisation of these competitions has been subcontracted to Edinburgh's Telford College (Scotland). Telford College is well-known for its equal opportunities policy and its facilities for disabled students (annual intake of 700 out of a total of 15,000).

As part of the HELIOS programme's awareness-raising activities, Telford College is responsible in particular for:

- organising competitions in 1995 and 1996
- producing good practice guides on promoting equal opportunities for disabled people
- organising prize-giving ceremonies for the competitions, and the European conferences at which they are held
- implementing other measures to raise public awareness of best practice in the field of integration and equal opportunities for disabled people.

## HELIOS competition judges

### Education

Mr A. Dens (B) - Mr J. Moller (DK)

### Social integration

Prof. Österwitz (D) - Ms Levendi (GR)

Mr J. Plaza Velubre (E)

### Functional rehabilitation

Mr D. Kenny (IRL) - Ms D'Orey (P)

### New technologies

Mr Emiliani (I) - Mr Ballé (F)

### Economic integration

Mr S. Duckworth (UK) - Mr Bley (L)

Ms Koster-Dreese (NL)

HELIOS

## exchange and information activities

The 63 theme-based groups in the four AEI sectors continued their series of study visits. Most of the groups have completed their third visit, and some their fourth. The themes and the addresses of the coordinators were given in issues 4, 5 and 6 of the *Flash*. In *HELIOS Flash* No. 6,

we also published the dates of 11 review seminars to be held between November 1994 and January 1995. Three other seminars were organised in Hannover (D) from 27 to 30 September (education and economic integration) and Rome (I) from 8 to 11 October (economic integration).

The next key stage of the exchange and information activities will be the publication of the reports on all 14 seminars early in 1995.

- All projects submitted should preferably provide for sound evaluation methods, with clear quality indicators.

## 2 Summary of selection criteria

The general features mentioned above which will be used as selection criteria can be summarized as follows:

- Equal opportunities
- Integration
- Participation
- Public awareness
- Innovation
- Transferability
- Quality

# procedures for entering the 1995 competitions

The competitions will be open to any organisations/projects within the European Union which meet the selection criteria.

The submission of entries will be coordinated by national government representatives on the HELIOS II Advisory Committee, which will receive nominations from national disability council representatives, the European Disability Forum, the HELIOS working groups and any other organisations of or for disabled people.

Any organisation wishing to enter the competition should contact their government representative (Advisory Committee member) listed below to obtain an application form.

Applications should reach the coordinating government representative by the end of February 1995. Winning projects will be announced in late September 1995.

## prizes

There will be three European prizes per theme, consisting of a gold, silver and bronze medal, accompanied by a plaque and a certificate.

The prizes will be awarded to the winners at a conference-exhibition due to take place in Brussels in early December 1995 to coincide with events surrounding the European day of Disabled People.

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# competitions

## call for entries

Within the framework of the HELIOS II programme, aimed at promoting equal opportunities for and the integration of disabled people, the European Commission will organise competitions throughout 1995 and award prizes. The prizes will be awarded to those projects within Member States judged to represent good and innovative practice in the following areas:

education-social integration-functional rehabilitation-  
new technologies for disabled people-economic integration

In organising the competitions, the Commission intends to raise European public awareness of specific regional, national or local activities which are models of good practice. It also intends to raise awareness of the key objectives of the HELIOS II programme itself.

## competition themes

The competition themes for 1995 are as follows:

### 1 Educational integration

Transition between levels of integrated education. Activities which demonstrate that integration is a continuing process, encompassing all levels of education, from the first step into the school register until post-compulsory school level. Good practice may be found:

- at policy level (respecting the right to integration and creating facilities for it)
- at provision level (dealing with the curriculum and the organisational structures)
- at the level of the providers (concerning competence of and cooperation between staff)

### 2 Social integration

Transition to independence as integrated members of the community. That means having choice and control over how you live. For example, access to information and training in independent living and peer counselling, access to housing and financial support in the form of personal budgets.

### 3 Functional rehabilitation

Coordinated and planned measures that are designed and delivered to allow disabled people

to receive proper techniques and therapies to improve or compensate for affected functions, and in which the disabled person is an equal partner in decision-making.

### 4 New technologies for disabled people

Providing opportunities to have access to distance activities and interpersonal communications promoting choice and control. For example, teleworking, teleshopping and distance learning)

### 5 Economic integration: vocational guidance

Vocational guidance and placement leading to integrated employment and integrated vocational training.

### 6 Economic integration: open employment

Innovative schemes to promote employment opportunities for disabled people in the open labour market, either through self-employment or employment with a larger employer, with the possibility of including measures designed to support these opportunities.

## selection criteria

### 1 Eligibility for entry to competitions

To be eligible for entry into the HELIOS II competitions, organisations/projects must be consistent with the HELIOS II aims. That is, they must demonstrate the following general features:

- The implementation of equal opportunity practices.
- Effective and full access for and integration of disabled people
- The full involvement of disabled people and/or their legal representatives and/or organisations in discussions and decision-making affecting the design and delivery of services. This could include evidence of self-advocacy, empowerment and access to information and consumer control.
- Organisations/projects will be expected to demonstrate that they encourage non-disabled people to value the differences of and the contributions made by disabled people. This could be achieved by raising the awareness of professionals and the general public through activities such as projects which increase the visibility of disabled people; promotion of good practice; and creating positive changes of attitude towards the disabled.
- All projects submitted should be innovative projects providing new insights into promoting equal opportunities for the integration of disabled people.
- All projects submitted should be potentially transferable to other countries of the EU, for example through networking to promote the exchange of information and other appropriate activities.

## Second European Day of Disabled Persons

The Second European Day of Disabled Persons was held throughout Europe on 3 December (see *HELIOS Flash* No. 6, p. 3). To mark the occasion, representatives of disabled people visited the European Parliament in Brussels to meet the MEPs of the All Party Disablement Group and submit a number of resolutions on 1 December. Commissioner Flynn was invited to this exceptional meeting, which was cofinanced by the Commission through the **HELIOS** programme.

As part of the preparation for this meeting, which had not yet taken place at the time of going to press, representatives of the national disability councils and the coordinating European NGOs, together with a representative of people with AIDS, met on 17 and 18 October to discuss the four themes chosen for this year's European Day of Disabled Persons: **a European definition of disability; eugenics, bioethics and euthanasia; independent living; and sexuality.** The proceedings of these preparatory discussions and the resulting resolutions were submitted to the MEPs on 1 December.

Regarding the **definition of disability**, participants in the preparatory meeting of 17 and 18 October unanimously agreed that disability is first and foremost a function of the individual's environment and social barriers to independent living and integration. The participants called upon the World Health Organisation (WHO) to review its definition, which they criticise for presenting disability as the "problem" of the individual and taking an overly medical approach; the group proposes the following European contribution to the definition of disability: "a disabled person is an individual in their own right, placed in a disabling situation brought about by environmental, economic and social barriers that the person, because of their impairment(s), cannot overcome in the same way as other citizens. These barriers are all too often reinforced by the marginalising attitudes of society."

With respect to **bioethics, euthanasia and eugenics**, the group restated the priority demands of quality of life and the right to dignity and self-determination for disabled people, who refuse to be cast in the role of a "tragic minority", as so often happens. Only disabled people themselves can assess their quality of life. Under no circumstances should the cost of achieving quality of life be a determining factor.

**Independent living** should be recognised as a right of disabled people, and it is for society to create the conditions in which they - including people with hidden impairments - can enjoy that right. However, the concept of independent living is closely bound up with the cultural environment, so the aim should not be to impose uniform solutions. For carers and personal assistants, commitment is not enough: they must themselves be given training in independent living to ensure that they respect and promote freedom of choice for disabled people. Direct payment for carers would be a major step towards ensuring independent living for disabled people and reducing the need for institutional care (and the excessive costs it entails).

As for **sexuality**, the participants pointed out that disabled people have a right to express their sexuality, and to make their own choices regarding sexual preference. Sexual abuse of disabled people is a phenomenon which should not be ignored. In many cases, information and education should be aimed

primarily at parents, to ensure that they allow their disabled children to become sexually active. Training should be provided by disabled people. Mention was also made of the right of disabled people to start a family and to live with their families, with particular reference to the fact that certain disabled children are often separated from their parents.

Mary Banotti, MEP and Vice-Chair of the EP All Party Disablement Group, attended the opening of the meeting and expressed the group's support for the meeting.

The definitive proceedings and the statements submitted to the MEPs on 1 December are available from the

European Day of Disabled Persons,  
c/o DPI-EUC,  
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## Euro-programmes

- ▶ The International Medical Society of Paraplegia (IMSOP), an NGO of medical professionals run by and for disabled people, has been approved as a European NGO partner in the prevention, early assistance and functional rehabilitation sector. The European NGO and European Disability Forum member responsible for coordinating the sector is RI-ECA.

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- ▶ The NGO Europrogrammes for 1995 were to be submitted to the European Disability Forum at its meeting on 5 December. They will be available on request from the **HELIOS** team of experts from 15 January.

## Mobility and transport

The Independent Living Group: Mobility and Transport was set up within the framework of the HELIOS programme and is chaired by a representative of the Commission's DG V. It comprises two representatives of each Member State and a representative of the European NGO Mobility International, a member of the European Disability Forum. The meetings are also attended by Commission officials from DG III (*Industry*) and DG VII (*Transport*), and an observer from the ECMT (*European Conference of Ministers of Transport*). The mobility and transport group collaborates with the Commission on mobility, and in particular transport for disabled people, and seeks to ensure consistency and complementarity between the various measures taken by the Commission in this field. The mobility and transport group meets twice a year (*23 March and 12 October in 1994*). It has several technical points on its agenda (*such as the follow-up to DG VII's COST 322 project on low-floor buses*) and other long-standing subjects of debate such as the issue of a European parking permit for disabled people. The priority which is emerging for 1995 is the proposal for a directive on minimum requirements to improve the mobility and safe transport to work of workers with reduced mobility, mentioned in the White Paper on social policy. The proposal for a directive was forwarded by the Commission to the Council on 6 February 1991 and amended on 19 December 1991 (*ref.: COM(91) 539 final - SYN 327*). It has not yet been adopted. Its objective is to make all forms of transport to work, and in particular public transport, accessible to people with reduced mobility. The proposal provides for very gradual implementation and leaves the Member States free to choose the means used.

Another major point on the group's agenda is the report from the Commission to the Council concerning the actions to be taken in the Community regarding the accessibility of transport to persons with reduced mobility (*COM(93) 433 final*). The report, drawn up on behalf of the Commission by DG VII in coordination with DG V, proposes a set of measures for the short, medium and long term. *COM(91) 539 and COM(93) 433 are available from the documentation service of the HELIOS team of experts.*

## Enlargement

On 1 January 1995, the European Union will number three or four additional Member States. Austria, Finland and Sweden are expected to join, after positive referendum results, and Norway may follow suit (*the outcome of the referendum of 28 November was not known at the time of going to press*). The new Union Member States will become full members of the HELIOS programme and will gradually be integrated into the various activities. Even if it decides against joining the Union, Norway is set to take part in the programme within the framework of the agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA), Protocol 31 of which concerns social policy. A fifth country, Iceland, will also be taking part in the HELIOS programme as a signatory to the EEA agreement.

The new EU Member States and the non-EU EEA countries will participate as full members in meetings of the HELIOS programme's Advisory Committee (*observers from the four prospective EU members were invited to the September and December meetings of the Advisory Committee and have had opportunities to meet Commission officials at additional meetings*). In 1995, both EU and non-EU EEA States will appoint a representative of a relevant national NGO or their national disability council to sit on the European Disability Forum. The five countries will also appoint representatives to the HANDYNET technical coordination group and the programme's working groups (*employment, education, mobility and transport, sport, and tourism*). Full participation of the five countries in HANDYNET is due to start in 1995, with the designation of their data collection centres and information and advice centres. An information and organisation session was held in Brussels with the future HANDYNET partners of the five countries. As regards the AELs, the new Member States are due to appoint partners in 1995, and the non-EU EEA countries will do so by 1996. NGOs in the new EU Member States will take part in the Europrogrammes as of 1995, while their non-EU EEA counterparts will join in 1996.

## Cochlear implants

On the initiative of the Commission, a working party on **cochlear implants** held its first meeting on 12 October. Its eight members were representatives of deaf people's organisations and professionals working with the deaf community (doctors, psychologists, etc.). In particular, the group will be reviewing attitudes and opinions regarding cochlear implants and attempting to determine the number of implants in Europe. A questionnaire will be sent out to associations of deaf people, the parents of deaf children, schools

for children with hearing disabilities, the medical profession and governments. The group is expected to publish the results of its research in June 1995.

To recap briefly, the cochlear implant is a hearing prosthesis comprising an internal receiver and an external emitter and sensor. The mini-receiver is surgically placed inside the cranium and connected to the auditory nerve by electrodes implanted in the cochlea, inside the inner ear.