

European Conference on Personal Assistance Services for Disabled People Demands Independent Living for all Disabled People.

(European Conference on Personal Assistance Services for Disabled People organised by the international disability movement with the help of GRAEL in the Rainbow Group in the European Parliament and the GRUNEN in the German Bundestag).

We, more than a hundred disabled people from Netherlands, United Kingdom, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, France, Austria, Finland, Belgium, USA, Hungary, FRG, and Norway, have come together from April 12th to 14th at Strasbourg in France to raise the issue of personal assistance services as a pre-requisite for independent living for disabled people.

In our view, independence is not measured by the quantities of tasks one can perform without assistance, but the quality of life one can have with assistance. Assistance in the context of independent living is given within the framework of a civil right and a service under the control of the recipient - where, when, how and by whom. Today these services are not being realised in any quantity in the European community.

Our coming together here in Strasbourg is the result of growing disability movements in countries all over the world. Increasingly we, disabled people, are raising our voices to speak against the warehousing of disabled people in special institutions, and against the denial of basic equal rights for disabled people by medical experts, policy makers and administrative officials.

In sharing our experiences about the social welfare systems and laws in our respective countries, we have found that by the exclusion of disabled people from the mainstream of society and the denial of access to personal assistance services we are prevented from entering the workforces and other spheres of social life. We are denied the right to independent living. These denials are also the basic sources of discrimination against disabled people.

We demand social welfare systems that include personal assistance services that are consumer controlled and which allow for various models of independent living for disabled people, regardless of impairment and income. We demand social welfare legislation which recognises these services as basic civil rights and which provide necessary appeal procedures. This conference is proof of a growing disability movement that will not stop until independent

living and full participation in society are realised for all disabled people.

Resolutions

1. Personal assistance services are a human and civil right which must be provided at no cost to the user. These services shall serve people with all types of impairments and all ages on the basis of functional need, irrespective of personal wealth, income, marital and family status.

2. Personal assistance users shall be able to choose from a variety of personal assistance service models which together offer the choice of various degrees of user control.

3. Services shall enable the user to participate in every aspect of life such as home, work, school, leisure, travel and political life etc.. These services shall enable disabled people, if they so choose, to build up a personal and family life and fulfil all the responsibilities connected with this.

4. These services must be available long term for anything up to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and similarly on a short term or emergency basis. These services shall include assistance with personal bodily functions, communication, household, mobility, work and other related needs. In the assessment of need the consumer's view must be paramount.

5. The funding authority shall ensure that sufficient funds are available to the user for adequate support, counselling, training of the user and the assistant, if deemed necessary to the user.

6. Funding must include assistant's competitive wages and employment benefits, all legal and union required benefits, or services.

7. Funding shall be a legislative right and payment must be guaranteed regardless of funding source or local government arrangements. Funding shall not be treated as disposable/taxable income and shall not make the user ineligible for other statutory benefits or services.

8. The user should be free to appoint as personal assistants whoever they choose including family members.

9. No individual shall be placed in an institutional setting because of lack of resources, high costs, sub-standard or non-existent services.

10. There shall be a uniform judicial appeals procedure which is independent of funders, providers and assessors; is effected within a reasonable amount of time and enables the claimant to receive legal aid at the expense of the statutory authority.

11. In furtherance of all the above, disabled people and organisations controlled by them must be decisively involved at all levels of policy making including planning, implementation and development.

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