

Europe to knock down barriers for disabled

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The one in six Europeans with a disability should be able to cross EU borders carrying a single card offering bloc-wide entitlements from next year, the European Commission said Monday.

A disabled parking card from one country, for example, would work in another, according to a plan to create a barrier-free Europe for the 80 million people with disabilities announced in Brussels.

"This figure is likely to go up as the European population ages in the next 20 years or so," said commission spokesman Matthew Newman.

Along with mutual recognition of national disability cards, the 27-nation bloc will seek by 2015 common rules and standards to make services accessible to the disabled and improve their lives.

In austerity-driven Europe, the measures in parallel are expected to have a knock-on effect on the economy, bolstering the market for assisted devices and services which is currently estimated at more than 30 billion euros a year.

"We help people and we're helping the economy," Newman said.

Deaf European parliamentarian Adam Kosa, a conservative from Hungary, said he welcomed the move and called for further efforts in developing the use of [sign language](#) and Braille as well as improved training to help people with disabilities join the jobs market.

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