

Two New Laws for Brazil's Disabled

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Yesterday, December 2, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva signed a decree regulating federal laws 10,048/2000 and 10,098/2000, which deal with care for the handicapped and accessibility in Brazil for people who suffer from disabilities or mobility limitations.

The signing ceremony was part of the commemoration of International Handicapped Day, which is celebrated today.

Law 10,048 establishes priority treatment for the handicapped and access to systems of transportation.

Law 10,098 has to do with access for people with limited mobility to buildings, public thoroughfares, urban equipment, and communication, information, and technical assistance devices,

In his address at the opening of the event, President Lula affirmed that respect for the rights of the disabled is also a cultural issue and will change in tandem with popular awareness.

The decree also determines that everything constructed after the date of its publication provide access to people with handicaps or limited mobility.

With respect to technical areas, the decree creates support for scientific and technological research for the development of equipment, instruments, and products.

Cities More Accessible

Brazilian cities need to be brought up to date in terms of guidelines and procedures for ensuring access and transportation facilities for the entire population, not just the supposed majority.

This is what was proposed, earlier in June, during the Brazilian Urban Accessibility Program - Accessible Brazil, launched by the Ministry of Cities, in São Paulo.

The Ministry sponsored the second round of debates on the program, to gather suggestions from municipal governments from various states, non-governmental organizations, and construction industry syndicates.

Brazil has 26.5 million people who suffer from some kind of disability, and, of these, at least 14% are physically disabled, according to the 2000 Census, prepared by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

Besides this contingent, the elderly, the obese, expectant mothers, and children represent significant portions of the population that should also be considered in urban projects.

According to the Secretary of the Ministry's Department of Urban Mobility, Renato Boareto, the purpose of the project is "to make instruments available for states and municipalities to implement policies of accessibility."

The program will be executed in three stages. In the first, the Ministry will furnish information on the training of government workers and adaptations in mass transit systems.

Next, a detailed plan will be formulated on how urban accessibility might be improved. The final stage is the reform and

construction of proposals. "In this stage, the Ministry can help with funding," Boareto declared.

The concern over accessibility is new in Brazil. The first moves in this direction were changes in some bus lines around 11 years ago. The Ministry's program was based on earlier experiences in cities like São Paulo, where a Permanent Commission on Accessibility (CPA) has existed for eight years.

One of the objectives is for municipal governments to incorporate the concept of accessibility, so that new projects do not contain obstacles when they are built.

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