



Info

Poland urged to drop new law banning 'homosexual propaganda' in schools

Following a debate on homophobia in Europe, Parliament adopted a resolution on Thursday voicing concern at the recent announcement by the Polish Education Minister of a new draft law to outlaw 'homosexual propaganda' in schools. The resolution - adopted by 325 votes to 124, with 150 abstentions - calls for a fact-finding mission to be sent to Poland, for "worldwide de-criminalisation of homosexuality" and for the Commission to take Member States to court if they breach their EU obligations.

Although Poland is not the only country in Europe where homophobia is an issue - MEPs also mention cases of discrimination in Italy and the United Kingdom - most of the resolution focuses on recent developments in Poland. MEPs not only express concern about statements by Minister **Giertych** regarding a new law providing for the dismissal, fining or imprisonment of school directors, teachers and pupils in cases of gay rights' activism, they also note the Polish government's stated wish to promote similar laws at European level and the fact that the Polish Ombudsman for Children announced that she is preparing a list of jobs for which homosexuals are unfit. On the positive side, MEPs welcome the fact that gay pride events are no longer systematically banned in Poland.

Among its demands, Parliament calls for the "worldwide de-criminalisation of homosexuality" and reiterates its call to all Member States to bring forward legislation outlawing discrimination against same-sex couples. It also wants the Commission to ensure that the "principle of mutual recognition" of national laws is applied in this field to ensure the free movement of gay couples without discrimination. The Commission is also asked to draft new EU directives to ensure that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in all areas is prohibited -- so far there is only a Community law on equal treatment at work. Lastly, the Commission is urged to take Member States to Court if they violate their obligations under EU law.

A fact-finding mission to Poland?

In the resolution, MEPs urge the Polish authorities "to refrain from proposing or adopting a law as described by the Vice Prime Minister and Polish Minister of education". They also call on the authorities to "publicly condemn and take measures against declarations by public leaders inciting discrimination and hatred based on sexual orientation".

Lastly, Parliament requests the Conference of Presidents [the EP's political group leaders] to send a fact-finding mission to Poland, with a view to getting a clear picture of the situation and entering into dialogue with all parties concerned.

The European Parliament adopted a similar resolution on the increase in racist and homophobic violence in Europe "and notably in Poland" in June 2006. At that time MEPs mandated the European Monitoring Centre on Racism to conduct an inquiry into the emerging racist climate in Poland.

Contact :**Maria ANDRES MARIN**

E-mail: libe-press@europarl.europa.eu

BXL: (32-2) 28 44299

STR: (33-3) 881 73603

PORT: (32) 0498.983.590

Jack BLACKWELL

E-mail: jack.blackwell@europarl.europa.eu

BXL: (32-2) 28 42929