

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1842/03

by Ulpu Iivari (PSE)

to the Commission

Subject: Equal treatment of blood donors

Article 21 of the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibits all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or other similar grounds. The way in which the Finnish Red Cross Blood Donor Service selects volunteers who come to give blood is, to my mind, inconsistent with that article because it places people on an unequal footing according to their sexual orientation.

In Finland all blood donors have to answer the questions put to them by the Red Cross Blood Donor Service. On the basis of the answers, the service nurse determines whether a person can give blood. The Blood Donor Service observes Council of Europe Recommendation No R (95) 15.

A man coming to give blood has to say whether he has ever been in a sexual relationship with another man. If the answer to that question is 'yes', he is automatically denied the right to give blood, even though he might satisfy the other criteria. If the answer is 'no', he can give blood if he satisfies the other criteria.

Directive 2002/98/EC¹ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 January 2003 setting standards of quality and safety for the collection, testing, processing, storage and distribution of human blood and blood components says nothing about the sexual orientation of donors and how it might affect the prospects for becoming a donor.

Will the Commission standardise the practices applying to blood donors in the different Member States so as to ensure compliance with Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights?

¹ OJ L 33, 8.2.2003, p. 30.