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Empowering women in a modern multicultural society

Committee Opinion[1]
Committee on Culture, Science and Education
Rapporteur: Mr Azis POLLOZHANI, "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

A. Conclusions of the committee

1. The Committee on Culture, Science and Education, supports the draft resolution and draft recommendation of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

2. It would propose some minor amendments to make the text reflect the terminology of the Council of Europe and the views of the Assembly that it is not for public authorities, including the Council of Europe, to intervene in inter-religious dialogue.

B. Amendment to the draft resolution

Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

In sub-paragraph 6.6 replace “intercultural and inter-religious dialogue” by “intercultural dialogue including its religious dimension”.

C. Amendments to the draft recommendation

Amendment B (to the draft recommendation)

In paragraph 5 replace “intercultural and inter-religious dialogue” by “intercultural dialogue including its religious dimension”.

Amendment C (to the draft recommendation)

In sub-paragraph 5.2 of the draft recommendation delete the words “and inter-religious”.

D. Explanatory memorandum, by Mr Pollozhani

1. The Committee on Culture, Science and Education supports the view that states must indeed protect women against violations of their rights (including those carried out in the name of religion) and reject all religious or cultural relativism where women’s rights are concerned. As a former chairman of our committee once said “where human rights are concerned there are no cultural exceptions”.

1. See Doc. 11612 tabled by the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

2. Unfortunately discrimination against women is still widespread in the world of today, despite all the positive action envisaged at world level to eradicate it, including the policy of the United Nations for nearly thirty years since the creation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979 and the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women held in Copenhagen in 1980.

3. At European level the situation is better. Twenty years ago, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted its Declaration on the Equality of Women and Men. Ten years ago, the Parliamentary Assembly created the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

4. These anniversaries should remind us that while gender equality has become a quasi customary political and legal notion in Europe, this is far from being the case elsewhere in the world.

5. It is important, however, to continue to be alert lest gender discrimination should resurface in Europe, for instance under backward-oriented philosophies or interpretations of religions. The questioning of co-education in schools or the wearing of traditional clothing by women are examples of where gender discrimination may find its way back into our societies.

6. The Committee on Culture, Science and Education, therefore, supports the draft resolution and draft recommendation of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

Reporting committee: Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

Committee for opinion: Committee on Culture, Science and Education.

Reference to committee: Doc. 10999 and Reference No. 3270 of 2 October 2006.

Opinion: approved by the committee on 21 May 2008. See Recommendation 1838 (20th Sitting, 23 June 2008).