Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Putting an end to coercive sterilisations and castrations

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER and other members of the Assembly

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This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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Coercive, non-reversible sterilisations and castrations constitute grave violations of human rights and human dignity, and cannot be accepted in Council of Europe member states.

Three groups of people have been particularly subject to these practices in the recent past: Romani women, convicted sex offenders and transgender persons.

From the 1970s on, Romani women were routinely sterilised in Czechoslovakia under the communist regime. Although this official policy ended with its fall, coercive sterilisation of Romani women (without their informed consent) continued well into the 21st century, both in the Slovak and the Czech Republic. Despite governmental action taken and court judgments rendered (in particular in the Czech Republic) in response to recommendations by NGOs, victims' groups and human rights mechanisms, not all victims of coercive sterilisation have received an apology and very few have received compensation, and it cannot be excluded that isolated incidents of the practice continue to this day.

For both ethical reasons and doubts about its efficacy, in most member states surgical castration on sexual offenders has not been practised for more than 40 years. Unfortunately, in several member states a debate as regards the merits of surgical castration as a crime-prevention policy has recently been reopened, and at least one country has re-started the practice according to the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT).

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, has recently openly criticised the fact that many member states impose sterilisation on transgender persons as a condition for the legal recognition of their preferred gender, a practice he describes as "forced".

The Parliamentary Assembly recommends that member states revise domestic legislation to put an end to the practice of coercive, non-reversible sterilisations and castrations, and ensure proper redress – including, when appropriate, compensation – to victims.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
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