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## PRESS RELEASE

Homophobia in Europe

### **European Parliament urges Polish authorities to refrain from proposing a law banning 'homosexual propaganda' in schools**

Following a plenary debate on the developments of homophobia in Europe, Parliament adopted today a resolution expressing their concern on the recent announcement by the Polish Minister on Education to propose a new law punishing 'homosexual propaganda' in schools. The text, adopted by 325 votes in favour, 124 against and 150 abstentions, requested to send a fact-finding mission delegation to Poland, called for a "worldwide de-criminalisation of homosexuality" and urged Commission to bring Member States to Court in case of violation of EU obligations.

Although Poland is not the only country to face problems with homophobia in Europe - MEPS explicitly mentioned other specific cases of discrimination occurred in Italy, United Kingdom and Poland- most of the report was focused on the recent developments in Poland. MEPs not only noted their concern on the statements made by Minister Giertych on proposing a new law providing for the dismissal, fines or imprisonment for school directors, teachers and pupils in cases of gay rights' activism in schools, but they also underlined that Polish government expressed desire to promote similar laws at European level or the fact that the Polish Ombudsman for Children announced that she is preparing a list of jobs for which homosexuals are unfit. On a more positive side, MEPs welcomed the fact that gay prides are not longer systematically banned in Poland.

As a result, members called for the "worldwide de-criminalisation of homosexuality" and reiterated their invitation to all Member States to propose legislation against discriminations lived by same-sex couples. They also asked the Commission to ensure that the "principle of mutual recognition" of national laws is applied in this field to ensure free circulation of gay couples without discriminations; and to propose new EU directives to ensure that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in all sectors is prohibited --so far there is only a Community law for equal treatment at work--. Finally, the Commission was also urged to bring Member States to Court in case of violation of EU obligations.

As a symbolic gesture, Parliament stressed it will mark each year on May 17th the International Day against Homophobia. The first time this Day was celebrated by civil liberties organisations was on 2005, the 15th anniversary of the day the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders.

#### **A reaction from Poland**

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

Finally, members "requested the Conference of presidents to send a delegation to Poland for a fact finding mission, with a view to getting a clear picture of the situation and enter 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. MEPs mandated then the European Monitoring Centre on Racism to conduct an inquiry into the emerging racist climate in Poland.

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