

Council of Europe Wants Total Decriminalisation of Abortion

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A committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), has now officially recommended that those few countries in Europe that still restrict abortions should guarantee unrestricted access to abortion. The draft resolution from the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men says countries should "decriminalise abortion, if they have not already done so." The Committee also recommended that sex education be made mandatory for young people. [...]

The Committee criticised even those legal restrictions that did not specifically prohibit abortion, saying, "The repeated medical consultations required, the time allowed for changing one's mind and the waiting time for the abortion all have the potential to make access to abortion more difficult, or even impossible in practice". [...]

The Council of Europe, distinct from the Council or Parliament of the European Union, does not have legal authority under European treaties to require compliance, but nonetheless is an influential part of the European legal machinery and its recommendations are taken seriously in member states and the drafting of EU laws.

Like most international and pan-European bodies, the Council of Europe is known among life and family advocates for its strong secularist bias and support for the full programme of the abortion and pan-sexualist movement and anti-Christian bias.

Council of Europe May Call for Abortion as a Right

European countries with the most liberal abortion laws also have highest abortion rates

By Maciej Golubiewski

WASHINGTON, March 14, 2008 (C-Fam.org) - A parliamentary committee of the Council of Europe met yesterday in Paris to consider a report called "Access to Safe and Legal Abortion in Europe." The report calls on the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe to make abortion an unconditional right. It also urges governments to use public monies to fund abortion. While the report calls for "access to safe and legal abortion" it also urges all the member states to "guarantee women's effective exercise of their right to abortion."

The report complains that where abortion is legal any restrictions are onerous, especially on poor women because they may have to travel for an abortion, and recommends that European governments lift all limits on abortion. The resolution goes further in calling on governments to provide "suitable financial (support)" for carrying out abortions. This would guarantee unrestricted, state-funded abortion-on-demand conceived as a human right.

The report points to the increased legal sophistication of pro-abortion advocates in Europe. By invoking "discriminatory effects" of national differences in the treatment of abortion, the writers of the report have adapted the American constitutional concept of "equal protection." Its application creates a uniform rights-based standard, which eliminates differences among state laws.

The report follows in the footsteps of a similar non-binding resolution passed by the European Parliament – a legislative body of the European Union. The so-called Van Lancker report adopted in 2001 used very similar language and recommended that "abortion should be made legal, safe and accessible to all." Yet, it stopped short of calling abortion a right.

The report, however, did not start out this way. David Fieldsend, manager of the Brussels-based CARE-Europe, writing to the members of the Parliamentary Assembly said, "We are saddened that a process that started with a call to consider 'abortion and its impact on women' from a concern about the negative effects of the high rate of abortions in some European countries has ended up with a draft resolution calling for abortion-on-demand to be made a right."

Fieldsend also challenged certain assumptions in the report, such as the idea that legalizing abortion leads to few abortions. Fieldsend points out the European countries with the most liberal abortion laws - Sweden, Denmark and the United Kingdom - also have the highest abortion rates. Fieldsend was most shocked by a paragraph of the report that asserts that abortion is the only "enlightened" choice. Fieldsend said support should also be given for women who want to raise their child as well as for those who want to place their child in a family through adoption.

If the committee passes the report, it will be passed along to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Any decision of the Parliamentary Assembly will be non-binding on EU member states, yet will be used like non-binding UN resolutions, as moral suasion to enforce a right to abortion. The Council of Europe is distinct from the bodies around the European Union; it is larger, with 47 Member States, and also older. The Council of Europe is considered the chief protector and promoter of human rights in Europe.

Gift of Life urges Maltese participation in CoE abortion vote

Gift of Life, the anti-abortion NGO, has urged the government to ensure that Malta's members of the plenary session of the Council of Europe are appointed in time to take part in a mid-April vote on a resolution on abortion.

The council will be called to vote on a resolution which calls for the de-criminalisation of abortion in all member states, including Malta, without restrictions.

"Such radical measures do not represent the views of the majority of the Maltese," Gift of Life insisted.

"Despite the logistical and practical difficulties that may arise from the fact that Parliament has not yet convened, Gift of Life is appealing to the Government of Malta to do all it can to appoint a representative of Malta to the Council of Europe in time to ensure that our voice is heard on the matter.

"Although this resolution would have no legal bearing on Malta, we feel that the Maltese Government should do its utmost to ensure that Malta's position is made clear at the plenary," Gift of life said.

The resolution follows a report approved by a committee of the council earlier this month called "Access to Safe and Legal Abortion in Europe."

The report called on the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe to make abortion an unconditional right and urged all the member states to "guarantee women's effective exercise of their right to abortion."

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<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20080327/local/gift-of-life-urges-maltese-participation-in-coe-abortion-vote>