Resolution on violation of freedom of expression and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in Lithuania

2010/2981(RSP) - 19/01/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 18 January 2011 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the violation of freedom of expression and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in Lithuania.

The resolution had been tabled by the Greens/ALE, S&D, GUE/NGL, and ALDE groups.

It calls on the Seimas to reject certain draft amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences, to include sexual orientation in the list of protected grounds in the Law on Education, enable minors to freely access information on sexual orientation, and clarify the meaning of the ban in the Law on Advertising. Parliament notes that this resolution was triggered by a series of worrying events such as the adoption of the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effects of Public Information, the attempted prohibition by local authorities on holding equality and gay pride marches, and the use by leading politicians and parliamentarians of inflammatory or threatening language and hate speech. It notes that on 16 December 2010, the Seimas postponed a vote on draft legislation that would amend the Code of Administrative Offences to punish the ‘public promotion of homosexual relations’ with a fine of between EUR 580 and EUR 2 900, because the amendments had not yet been examined by the relevant parliamentary committees and are still under review by the Lithuanian national authorities.

The resolution reaffirms that the EU Institutions and Member States have a duty to ensure that human rights are respected, protected in the EU, as provided for by the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union, without distinction on grounds of sexual orientation.

However, it points out that the proposed amendments have not yet been voted by the plenary of the Lithuanian Parliament and are still under review by the Lithuanian national authorities. It acknowledges the firm stand taken on several occasions by President of the Republic of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskait, denouncing draft homophobic legislation as being harmful for Lithuanian citizens and the image of Lithuania, and calls on the President to veto the amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences should they be approved;

Members commend the bilateral action taken so far by the Commission, and they call on the Commission to undertake a legal assessment of the proposed amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences and issue an EU Roadmap with concrete measures against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.