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The need to reconcile work and family life

Recommendation 1769 (2006)

Reply from the Committee of Ministers
adopted at the 993rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (12 April 2007)

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully considered Recommendation 1769 (2006) of the Parliamentary Assembly on the need to reconcile work and family life.
2. The Committee of Ministers agrees with the Parliamentary Assembly that there are persistent difficulties where it comes to reconciling work and family life, particularly for women. It thanks the Assembly for its proposals, which it has brought to the attention of the member states' governments so that they can draw on them when devising and implementing gender equality policies at national level. It also notes that these recommendations are in line with those contained in the Resolution and the Action Plan adopted at the 6th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men, held in Stockholm on 8 and 9 June 2006, on the theme "Human rights and economic challenges in Europe – Gender equality".
3. In the appendix to this Resolution entitled "Achieving gender equality: a challenge for human rights and a prerequisite for economic development", the European Ministers responsible for gender equality emphasised, like the Assembly, that a key factor in this area was the full and comprehensive implementation of Recommendation R (96) 5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on reconciling work and family life. The Committee of Ministers would like to insist on the importance of the guidelines contained in Recommendation R (96) 5 and encourages the member states to take due account of them.
4. The Committee of Ministers points out that Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making also contains provisions relating to the reconciliation of work and family life in its appendix, in effect placing this matter in the broader context of achieving equality between women and men, which forms an integral part of human rights and is one of the Council of Europe's main objectives.
5. The Assembly rightly refers to the revised European Social Charter, an instrument which guarantees social and economic rights and their enjoyment without discrimination on grounds of sex. The Committee of Ministers believes that the application of this instrument may also make it possible to achieve the objectives set by the European Union's Lisbon Strategy, referred to by the Assembly. In this connection, it would call to mind the undertakings made and the objectives set at the Third Summit of the Council of Europe, where it was stated that the Council of Europe would step up its work in the social policy field "on the basis of the European Social Charter and other relevant instruments". The Committee of Ministers therefore invites those member states which have not yet done so to sign or ratify as the case may be the revised European Social Charter.
6. It also calls on the member states more generally to make full use of the existing legal framework within the Council of Europe to promote the reconciliation of work and family life and to take appropriate measures to achieve genuine equality between women and men.