



# Parliamentary Assembly Assemblée parlementaire

Doc. 11389

1 October 2007

## “HIV/AIDS in Europe”

Recommendation 1784 (2007)

## “The spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic to women and girls in Europe”

Recommendation 1785 (2007)

Reply from the Committee of Ministers

adopted at the 1005<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (26 September 2007)

1. The Committee of Ministers has taken note of Parliamentary Assembly Recommendations 1784 (2007) on “HIV/Aids in Europe” and 1785 (2007) on “The spread of the HIV/Aids epidemic to women and girls in Europe”. It transmitted both recommendations to the European Health Committee (CDSP), and Recommendation 1785 (2007) to the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men (CDEG). The comments received from the Bureau of each of these committees have been taken into account in the present reply.

2. The Committee of Ministers is pleased to note the focus of attention of the Parliamentary Assembly on all matters related to HIV/Aids in Europe particularly as regards its impact on women and girls. As pointed out in the recommendation, HIV/Aids is actively under consideration at member states', European Union and global level (WHO). Thanks to the intensive efforts of many institutes and organisations, much data is at hand from which rich sources of information can be pooled and as a result of which many significant medical advances are being made.

3. The Committee of Ministers shares the concerns of the Parliamentary Assembly with regard to the issues raised and it encourages the continuation of all work, both in the medical and political sphere, to address the epidemic. It recognises the need for a co-ordinated, strategic approach and it agrees that the Council of Europe should support all activities in this field.

4. However, given the extensive work undertaken by other European and international organisations in the area of HIV/Aids, particularly as regards developing guidelines and unified HIV/Aids indicators for comparable data, the Committee of Ministers considers that the Council of Europe should guard against duplication of efforts. As such, it considers that the Council of Europe's role should remain focused on ethical, human and patients' rights issues, in line with the Organisations core objectives. In this context, the relevant bodies of the Council of Europe may contribute to increasing awareness of HIV/Aids and disseminating information.

5. With specific reference to the issue of the impact of HIV/Aids on women and girls, the Committee of Ministers agrees with the Parliamentary Assembly that the empowerment of girls and women in Europe is a key factor in the fight against HIV/Aids. It agrees that enacting laws and policies which promote equality between women and men, implementing measures to combat violence against women, using the gender mainstreaming strategy and making men aware of the importance of their role in combating discrimination against women are key elements.

6. With regard to the awareness-raising measures recommended by the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers informs the Parliamentary Assembly that a draft recommendation on gender mainstreaming in education is being prepared by the CDEG, in co-operation with the Steering Committee for Education (CDED). The measures envisaged propose, among other things, the preparation of gender-sensitive school curricula and measures for making teachers, educational staff and pupils aware of problems of violence, particularly in a domestic environment.

7. With regard to the medical treatment of this illness and the need to take account of the specificities of both women and men, the Committee of Ministers also wishes to point out that a draft recommendation on “the inclusion of gender differences in health policy” is being prepared. During the preparation of this text, it has been proposed, in the context of the protection of human rights, to make gender one of the priority areas of action in health through policies and strategies which address the specific health needs of women and men and that incorporate gender mainstreaming.

8. The Committee of Ministers also underlines that all the activities of the CDEG are aimed at establishing “the requisite legal and institutional frameworks for ensuring the observance, protection and exercise of the fundamental rights of women and girls, including in Europe” as mentioned in point 9.5 of Recommendation 1785 (2007). The draft recommendation on “gender equality standards and mechanisms”, which the CDEG is currently finalising, will constitute a legal framework, setting out the full range of measures that member states can introduce to eliminate discrimination against women and achieve effective gender equality.

9. Finally, the Committee of Ministers, recalling Article 11 of the Revised European Social Charter on the right to protection of health, and more particularly paragraph 3 regarding states’ obligation to prevent infectious diseases, urges those member states that have not already done so to envisage ratifying the Charter and accepting Article 11.