



## INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

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#### THE PROPOSED "EQUAL TREATMENT DIRECTIVE"

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to take just a few minutes today to speak about an EU directive that was first proposed in 2008 but remains unimplemented to this day.

The directive is known as the "Equal Treatment" directive and there is a reason it has not been implemented: it will drastically expand European law on non-discrimination, moving it into the area of "the provision of goods and services". As such, it poses grave new threats to religious freedom.

In the United Kingdom, where similar laws have been in operation since 2007, the effects have been devastating:

1. For example, although the UK's Catholic adoption agencies had been in existence for over a hundred years and were widely recognized as being some of the best in the country, today, the agencies have all but closed, or been forced to remove their Christian ethos. Why? Because, in accordance with their beliefs, they refused to place children with same-sex couples and this was considered discrimination in the provision of a service. There was no tolerance shown to the agencies and it is hard to see how anyone has benefitted from losing their dedicated services.
2. Christian guesthouse owners, Peter and Hazelmary Bull, have also come under attack for upholding a longstanding policy which stated that double bedded rooms could only be rented to married couples.



The elderly guesthouse owners, who ran the business from their own home, were successfully sued by a same-sex couple - who argued that it was discriminatory to be prevented from accessing a double bed. The guesthouse owners have now all but lost their business.

3. And recently, Christian doctors have been told that they must be prepared to perform so-called “gender reassignment” surgery if a patient requests it – to refuse to perform the operation would be discrimination in the provision of a service.

Examples of such intolerance abound, and examples will grow dramatically if the so-called “Equal Treatment Directive” is implemented throughout the EU.

There are simply so many problems with the proposed directive:

1. The implementation costs for businesses and governments would be millions upon millions of euros;
2. Organisations supposedly created “for the promotion of equal treatment” would create new powerful bureaucratic bodies charged with enforcing a particular ideology;
3. Activist groups are empowered and encouraged by the Directive to take part in litigation; politicizing the complaints procedure and leading to vastly increased litigation fuelled by special interest groups;
4. And the language used in the directive (for example, in the harassment provisions) is so vague that all sorts of actions could be considered offensive and unlawful. Very likely, people could complain that bibles in hotels or hospitals were offensive, that crosses at cemeteries were offensive, or even that Christmas celebrations were offensive.

I encourage all of us to work hard to prevent this EU “Equal Treatment Directive” from ever being implemented.



The Directive can only become law if all member states agree to it at a meeting of the Council of the EU. Therefore, it is vital that we highlight to our national leaders the great danger that it poses.

Towards the end of 2008, resolutions were passed in the Czech Republic, Germany and France, condemning the Directive. We should look to get similar resolutions passed in other EU Member States.

Secondly, although the power to enact or dismiss the proposal lies with the Council, it must consult the European Parliament and “have regard for its opinion” before voting on the Commission proposal. Therefore, as well as working with national governments to get resolutions against the Directive adopted, we must also continue to work with Members of the European Parliament – who previously indicated support for the proposed Directive in April 2009.

Finally, we must, remain vigilant. The directive lies dormant within the mechanisms of the EU at the moment, but it has not been extinguished. We need to keep working until it is removed completely. Thank you.

**Mr. Paul Coleman**

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