

ARMENIA: CoE report recommends measures to improve women's rights

Recommendation measures also address the protection of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, and establishing accountability for past human rights violations

CoE/Commissioner for Human Rights (29.01.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2ME5wGF>– Today the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, published [the report of her visit to Armenia](#) carried out in September 2018. The report focuses on women's rights, gender equality and domestic violence; the human rights of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups; and accountability for past human rights violations.

Finding that women in Armenia remain significantly underrepresented in public decision-making, the Commissioner urges the authorities to ensure women's full and effective participation, as well as equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of public life, equal pay and equal access to the labour market. In order to counter the persisting discriminatory gender stereotypes, Commissioner Mijatović recommends raising public awareness and promoting gender equality, especially through education.

To build on the considerable improvements to Armenia's legislation against domestic violence, the Commissioner recommends ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, while ensuring that the new national legislation is

effectively applied in practice. Specifically, she urges the authorities to increase the availability of places in shelters for victims of domestic violence, and to ensure access to education for children staying in such shelters.

Another focus area of the report is the human rights of persons with disabilities, children, older persons and LGBTI people.

While welcoming the authorities' clear commitment towards de-institutionalisation of persons with disabilities, the Commissioner recommends that revised legislation governing state support to persons with disabilities ensure their inclusion in all decision-making processes that concern them. In particular, she calls on the authorities to put an end to plenary guardianship for persons with psycho-social disabilities and to move from a substituted to a supported decision-making model for all persons who may require such support.

The Commissioner encourages the government to achieve its aim to make all education fully inclusive by 2025, and recommends that special attention be paid to ensuring inclusive education at the pre-school level and to pursuing de-institutionalisation equally for children with and without disabilities. She also recommends that Armenia solidify its commitment to international standards in this area, by accepting additional provisions of the Revised European Social Charter, and by ratifying instruments allowing for individual and collective complaints. The Commissioner welcomes the recent appointment of a well-known disability rights activist as Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, and encourages the government to take further action to raise public awareness on

the rights of persons with disabilities.

Commissioner Mijatović recommends that Armenia strengthen its efforts to combat child poverty and to guarantee the right of all children to an adequate standard of living. She is particularly concerned by the placement in state care of children whose parents face socio-economic difficulties. She encourages the authorities to expand their efforts to allocate resources for parents resuming care over their children, while promoting foster care – including for children with disabilities – when this is in the child’s best interest. The Commissioner also recommends that Armenia improve its legislation protecting all children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, in particular by ratifying the Council of Europe Lanzarote Convention.

To address the inadequate level of social protection of older persons in Armenia, the Commissioner recommends raising the overall level of old age pensions, increasing the availability of primary and specialised health care at the home or in the community, and tackling the shortage of medical professionals specialised in geriatric services.

The Commissioner further recommends that the authorities promptly adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law which should specifically include a clear reference to sexual orientation and gender identity. She calls on the authorities to take prompt and resolute action against all instances of violence, hate speech and hate crime targeting LGBTI persons in Armenia. Such incidents must be firmly condemned and investigated, and those responsible prosecuted. She also urges parliamentarians to unequivocally reject any legislative proposals that may infringe on the rights of LGBTI persons or

stoke anti-LGBTI sentiments.

Lastly, Commissioner Mijatović welcomes the steps taken to finally establish the truth and prosecute those responsible for the deaths that occurred during the violent events of March 2008. At the same time, she stresses the importance of ensuring that this process is conducted in a careful manner and in strict adherence to the principles of rule of law, judicial independence, transparency and guarantees of fair trial, in order to dispel any accusations of alleged revenge politics or selective justice. She also calls on the Armenian authorities to protect the presumption of innocence of any person charged with criminal misconduct and to avoid using polarising, stigmatising or inflammatory language in their public discourse, which the Commissioner believes to be an obstacle to building a cohesive society and healing past divisions.

[Read the report here.](#)

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