



THE EQUAL RIGHTS TRUST

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The Equal Rights Trust
is a company limited by
guarantee incorporated
in England. Company
number 5559173.
It is also a registered
charity, number 1113288.

Dimitrina Petrova
Executive Director

London 30 May 2008

Miloslav Vlček

Chairperson of the Chamber of Deputies
Parlament České republiky
Poslanecká sněmovna
Sněmovní 4
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Dear Mr Vlček,

I am writing to you on behalf of The Equal Rights Trust to urge you and your colleagues, deputies of the Czech Parliament, to adopt at your next session on 3 June 2008 the Law on Equal Treatment and Legal Measures of Protection from Discrimination and Amendments to Some Laws (further referred to as the Anti-discrimination bill).

The Equal Rights Trust (ERT) is an independent international organisation whose purpose is to combat discrimination and promote equality as a fundamental human right and a basic principle of social justice. Building on the highest achieved levels of protection against discrimination, best practices and current discussions, ERT promotes a holistic, unified approach to equality and human rights.

ERT highly values the efforts that you and your colleagues have invested in developing the Anti-discrimination bill and the participation of Czech public institutions and civil society organisations in the drafting process leading up to this bill. ERT is of the view that the Anti-discrimination bill provides a new and more effective framework for protection from discrimination in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, the bill has transposed into the Czech legal system the European Union's equal treatment directives: Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. This was a commitment that the Czech Republic voluntarily entered into when joining the European Union in May 2004.

ERT was deeply concerned that on 16 May 2008 President Václav Klaus vetoed the Anti-discrimination bill which the Czech Parliament had adopted on 24 April 2008. When exercising his veto, President Václav Klaus, stated, in an open letter addressed to you, that he considered this law “to be useless, counter-productive and of low quality and its consequences very problematic”. President Klaus also stated that the current legal protection against discrimination in the Czech Republic is adequate. ERT believes that this position is in stark contradiction with the results of studies carried out by leading Czech and international anti-discrimination experts. These studies have in fact motivated the need for adopting a comprehensive anti-discrimination law. They have demonstrated that the existing system: (i) lacks legal definitions of forms of discrimination; (ii) does not provide even minimal protection against discrimination in certain fields of activity, such as education, social security, and access to health; (iii) does not contain a consistent system of sanctions; and (iv) lacks specialised bodies to protect against discrimination (for example an independent body that would be mandated to assist victims of discrimination, conduct research into discrimination patterns and issue recommendations for promoting equality).

The Equal Rights Trust appeals to you and your colleagues to override the unfortunate veto of President Klaus and once again vote for the adoption of the Law on Equal Treatment and Legal Measures of Protection from Discrimination in order to ensure that people in the Czech Republic have effective protection against all forms of discrimination, to which they are entitled as citizens of the European Union.

Yours sincerely,

Dimitrina Petrova

Executive Director