

Press Release

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Council of Europe Secretary General reacts to the dismissal of a Polish official responsible for the distribution of a Council of Europe publication

Strasbourg, 13.06.2006 - "I do not understand how teaching tolerance can be grounds for dismissal" said Terry Davis after a meeting with the Polish Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe as a result of reports that a Polish official has been dismissed for using a Council of Europe handbook on human rights education.

"I asked the Polish government to clarify the circumstances in which Mr Miroslaw Sielatycki, Director of the Polish In-Service Teachers Training Centre, has been dismissed.

I made it clear that the Polish government is free to decide whether it wishes to use Council of Europe material for human rights education, but if the teaching material is optional, the values and principles contained therein are certainly not.

I am very concerned about a number of incidents in various Council of Europe member states in recent weeks. Discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is not showing any signs of decline, and it is regrettable that prejudiced attitudes contrary to the most basic human rights standards of the Council of Europe are apparently being endorsed and even promoted by persons in official positions. I shall not make any specific comments on the case of Mr Sielatycki until I receive an official reply from the Polish government" concluded the Secretary General.

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 46 member states.