Equal treatment: implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation

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The Council conducted a policy debate, open to the public, on the proposal for a Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

The debate was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire submitted by the Presidency. The questionnaire aimed, in particular, to clarify Member States' ambitions in respect of the Directive, the scope which they wished to give to the principle of equal treatment at Community level, the link between a Community framework and national powers and their position concerning the equal treatment of persons with disabilities.

A large number of Ministers favoured a high level of ambition. Several Ministers said that their existing national legal systems went beyond the Commission proposal. Some Ministers questioned the need to establish Community rules in this area, while supporting the principle of equal treatment.

Ministers underlined the importance of the proposal with regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which had been signed by all the Member States and was in the process of being ratified by most of them. Some delegations would have preferred more ambitious provisions concerning measures to combat discrimination on grounds of disability. Most delegations asked for certain parts of the proposal to be clarified with regard to legal certainty. A large number of delegations requested clarifications regarding the proposal's economic and financial impact.

Based on the division of powers as defined in the existing Directives, Commissioner Vladimir ?PIDLAsaid that, according to his analysis, Member States' sovereignty in the areas concerned would not be affected by the proposal.

The Council asked its preparatory bodies to continue to work actively on this file with a view to improving the text both from a legal viewpoint and in terms of clarifying the provisions.