

Ref. CommDH 014 (2015)

## **Europe disregards intersex people's right to self-determination and physical integrity**

<http://bit.ly/1EvSsGT>

Strasbourg, 12 May 2015 – “Europeans remain largely unaware of the painful personal histories of intersex people and the human rights violations they face. Stereotypes and norms grounded on the binary female-male classification have led to unnecessary medical and surgical interventions on intersex infants and a climate of incomprehension in society. It is time to address this unacceptable situation,” said today Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, while releasing a [research paper on human rights and intersex people](#).

The six-chapter paper addresses the medical, legal and administrative obstacles which prevent intersex people, some of whom were called “hermaphrodites” in the past, from fully enjoying their human rights. “By publishing it, I intended to provide more detailed guidance to address this neglected human rights problem,” said the Commissioner.

The paper informs governments and practitioners about current ethical and human rights developments, including global best practices already taken to protect and empower intersex people, for example through reforms of equal treatment legislation. It also contains recommendations on ways to move forward in particular in the legal and medical fields.

“European countries have been slow in recognising and upholding the human rights of intersex people and the gender diversity they represent. It is urgent to end unnecessary medical treatment and surgery of intersex individuals without their consent; to respect their right not to undergo sex assignment treatment; to review medical classifications which treat variations in sex characteristics as a pathology; and to ensure intersex persons’ right to self-determination by facilitating their legal recognition in official documents.”

The Commissioner also recommends further measures which include giving intersex people full access to their medical records, raising public awareness and carrying out professional training about the problems encountered by intersex people, and improving counselling of intersex children and their parents.

[Infographic: the report in a nutshell](#)

### **Press contact in the Commissioner's Office:**

Stefano Montanari, + 33 (0)6 61 14 70 37; [stefano.montanari@coe.int](mailto:stefano.montanari@coe.int)  
[www.commissioner.coe.int](http://www.commissioner.coe.int); Twitter: [@CommissionerHR](#); [Facebook](#); [youtube](#).

The Commissioner for Human Rights is an independent, non-judicial institution within the Council of Europe, mandated to promote awareness of, and respect for, human rights in the 47 member states of the Organisation. Elected by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the present Commissioner, Mr Nils Muižnieks, took up his function on 1 April 2012.