

Press Release

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Council of Europe: Reports on racism in Andorra, Latvia, the Netherlands and Ukraine

Strasbourg, 12.02.2008 – The Council of Europe's independent human rights monitoring body specialised in combating racism, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), today released four new reports examining racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance in Andorra, Latvia, the Netherlands and Ukraine. ECRI recognises that positive developments have occurred in all four of these Council of Europe member countries. At the same time, however, the reports detail continuing grounds for concern for the Commission:

In **Andorra**, a new Criminal Code came into force, providing for the racist motivation of a criminal offence to be regarded as an aggravating circumstance and prohibiting incitement to racial hatred as well as racist organisations. However, Andorra has not yet ratified Protocol N°12 to the European Convention on Human Rights and does not have a detailed and comprehensive body of civil and administrative law prohibiting racial discrimination in all areas.

In **Latvia**, a clear prohibition of racial discrimination was included in the Labour code and efforts have been made to increase the number of non-citizens being granted Latvian citizenship, either by encouraging or facilitating naturalisation. Nevertheless there remain a number of problems as to the full integration of the Russian-speaking population. The number of racially-motivated attacks targeting visible minorities has been increasing and the use of racist discourse, by some politicians and in the media, remains a problem.

In the **Netherlands**, work is underway for the establishment of a network of professional local anti-discrimination bureaus throughout the country, with the aim of improving the protection provided to victims of racism and racial discrimination and the monitoring of these phenomena. However, the tone of Dutch political and public debate on integration and other issues relevant to ethnic minorities has experienced a dramatic deterioration. The criminal justice system, and notably the police, still needs to enhance its role in monitoring and countering racially-motivated offences.

In **Ukraine**, the Committee for Nationalities and Religion became fully operational with, among other tasks, combating racism and racial discrimination. However, criminal legislation against racially-motivated crimes has not been strengthened and the authorities have not yet adopted a comprehensive body of civil and administrative anti-discrimination laws. There have been very few prosecutions against people who make antisemitic statements or publish antisemitic literature. Members of the Roma community still face many inequalities in areas such as education, employment and housing.

These new reports form part of a third monitoring cycle of Council of Europe member states' laws, policies and practices aimed at combating racism. ECRI's country-specific reports are available in English, French and the national language of the country concerned at <http://www.coe.int/ecri>. They cover all member states on an equal footing, from the perspective of protecting human rights. They examine whether ECRI's main recommendations from previous reports have been followed and, if so, to what degree of success and effectiveness.

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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 47 member states.