

Press Release

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European Commission against Racism and Intolerance publishes reports on Bulgaria, Hungary and Norway

Strasbourg, 24.02.2009 – Eva Smith Asmussen, Chair of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), announced today the release of the first three reports of a new series of country monitoring, examining racism and intolerance in Europe. The reports on [Bulgaria](#), [Hungary](#) and [Norway](#) are the first of ECRI's fourth round of country monitoring work, which focuses on the implementation of ECRI's previous recommendations, the evaluation of policies and new developments since its last report.

ECRI underlines that positive developments have occurred in all three of these Council of Europe member states. At the same time, however, the reports detail continuing grounds for concern for ECRI:

In **Bulgaria**, the legal and institutional framework against racism and discrimination has been strengthened and initiatives have been taken to improve the situation of Roma and of refugees. However, some anti-racism or anti-discrimination legal provisions are rarely applied, the situation of Roma and asylum seekers remains worrying, the public's awareness of problems of racism and intolerance still needs to be raised, and the response of the justice system to racist publications and to allegations of racist or discriminatory behaviour on the part of the police should be improved.

In **Hungary**, the Equal Treatment Authority which has been operating since 2005 can award compensation to victims of discrimination and impose fines on persons or bodies that commit discrimination. A variety of measures have also been taken to improve the integration of disadvantaged individuals, including Roma, and steps have been taken to improve the situation of asylum seekers. However, the recent rise in racist and xenophobic discourse in Hungarian society is worrying, as is the continuing disadvantage experienced by Roma in every field of daily life. Negative stereotypes also remain with respect to migrants and asylum seekers, who experience difficulties in gaining access to housing and employment.

In **Norway**, the legal and institutional framework against racism and discrimination has been strengthened and the vast majority of the measures foreseen in the National Plan of Action to Combat Racism and Discrimination (2002-2006) have been implemented. However, the situation of persons of immigrant background remains worrying in sectors such as employment and school education, as well as the situation of Roma and Romani/Tatars. Political discourse sometimes takes on racist and xenophobic overtones, and the police still have important challenges to take up, including in the field of addressing racial profiling.

For each of these country monitoring reports an **interim follow-up** will take place no later than two years after the publication of the reports.

ECRI's country-specific reports, with government observations appended, are available at: www.coe.int/ecri

ECRI is an independent human rights body of the Council of Europe which monitors problems of racism and intolerance, prepares reports and issues recommendations to member states.

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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.