

Press Release

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Combating racism in sports: ECRI's advice to governments

Strasbourg, 19.03.2009 – To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, on 21 March, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) today launched a comprehensive set of recommendations to governments across Europe on how to fight racism and racial discrimination in the field of sport.

ECRI's twelfth General Policy Recommendation follows a rise in racist behaviour in and around sporting grounds in many European countries, and is addressed to all 47 Council of Europe member States.

Among other things, ECRI urges governments to:

- ensure equal opportunities in access to sport for all, with a special emphasis on promoting access to sport of children from different backgrounds;
- encourage sport clubs and federations to recognise that racism is an important problem in sports and to adopt and implement self-regulatory, disciplinary and awareness raising measures to deal with it;
- encourage referees to react appropriately where fans or athletes engage in racist behaviour by imposing adequate measures and sanctions, including by suspending competitions;
- alert police officers and stewards to the problem of racism in sports and train them in how to identify, deal with and prevent racist behaviour at sporting events;
- prosecute people who engage in racist behaviour in and around sporting events;
- organise and finance large scale anti-racism awareness raising campaigns for combating racism and racial discrimination in sport;
- build a coalition against racism in sport, bringing together all relevant actors in this field, including ministries of education and sport, national and international sports federations, sports clubs, athletes, sports coaching and referees' unions, supporters' organisations, local authorities, educational institutions, national anti-discrimination bodies, minority organisations, sports and anti-racism NGOs, sponsors and the media.

The full text of the Recommendation along with its Explanatory Memorandum can be found at www.coe.int/ecri

ECRI is the Council of Europe's independent human rights monitoring body on issues related to racism and racial discrimination.

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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.