

# Press Release

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### 47 member States

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Azerbaijan  
Belgium  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Bulgaria  
Croatia  
Cyprus  
Czech Republic  
Denmark  
Estonia  
Finland  
France  
Georgia  
Germany  
Greece  
Hungary  
Iceland  
Ireland  
Italy  
Latvia  
Liechtenstein  
Lithuania  
Luxembourg  
Malta  
Moldova  
Monaco  
Montenegro  
Netherlands  
Norway  
Poland  
Portugal  
Romania  
Russia  
San Marino  
Serbia  
Slovakia  
Slovenia  
Spain  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"  
Turkey  
Ukraine  
United Kingdom

## The Council of Europe Commission against Racism and Intolerance publishes new reports on Belgium, Germany and Slovakia

Strasbourg, 26.05.2009 – The Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) released today three new reports examining racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance in Belgium, Germany and Slovakia. The ECRI reports note positive developments in all three of these Council of Europe member states, but also detail continuing grounds for concern, said the Chair of ECRI, Eva Smith Asmussen.

In **Belgium**, the Federal Action Plan to combat racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and related violence was adopted in 2004 and its implementation is in progress. Steps have been taken to improve the content and the implementation of legislation to combat racial discrimination and racism. However, cases of racial discrimination, particularly against non-citizens, persons of immigrant background, Muslims and Travellers, still occur in fields such as access to employment, education and housing. The persistence of racist, antisemitic, islamophobic and xenophobic discourse by some politicians and on the Internet is worrying.

In **Germany**, the adoption of the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) has strengthened the legal and institutional framework against racism and discrimination; there are signs of improved dialogue with the Muslim community and the authorities have begun to develop a strong new focus on integration, aiming to help migrants participate fully in German society. However, violent racist, xenophobic and antisemitic attacks continue to be reported, and support for parties expressing racist, antisemitic or revisionist views has increased. At the same time, discrimination in daily life is reported by members of the Muslim, Turkish, Black as well as Roma and Sinti communities.

In **Slovakia**, a new Criminal Code containing several provisions on racially-motivated crimes was adopted in 2006 and the Anti-Discrimination Act, which prohibits discrimination based on, among others, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, colour and language, was passed in 2004. However, the situation of the Roma remains worrying in areas such as education, housing, employment and health and instances of police brutality against members of this minority still occur. A rise in racist political discourse by some politicians targeting primarily Hungarians, as well as Roma and Jewish people, has been noted. The integration of refugees is still an issue that needs to be tackled, namely through the integration strategy devised by the Slovak authorities.

These new reports form part of a fourth monitoring cycle of the 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.

*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.