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Austria: antipathy towards migrants and online hate speech at worrying levels, despite integration policies and awareness raising, says the Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 13.10.2015 - The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) today published a new [report](#) on Austria analysing recent developments and outstanding issues, and providing recommendations to the authorities (link to the [German version](#) of the report).

"The authorities have made major efforts to set up an effective integration strategy, but concerns remain, such as hate speech on the Internet, the activities of organisations cultivating racist ideologies and difficulties for victims of racism and discrimination to obtain aid and redress," said ECRI's Chair, Christian Ahlund.

On the positive side, amendments to the Criminal Code meant to improve the protection against racism and intolerance are under way. In response to a previous ECRI recommendation, the Press Council was re-established in 2010 and has issued several decisions condemning hate speech in the media. In 2010 the first ever National Action Plan on Integration was adopted; it is continuously improved and its impact is monitored. Children with migration backgrounds benefit from a free compulsory preschool year. A special form of registered partnership was introduced for same-sex couples in 2010. Courts lowered legal preconditions for gender recognition of transsexual persons.

On the other hand, there are gaps in the criminal law provisions; some only target national-socialist and not all racist activities. Antipathy towards migrants remains high. The law is not applied firmly enough to organisations that disseminate racist, xenophobic and neo-Nazi ideas. Hate speech on the Internet is not regularly monitored, and hate speech by politicians not systematically countered. Not all children with migration backgrounds acquire adequate knowledge of German. LGBT persons experience relatively high discrimination; young LGBT persons lack assistance in their coming-out. The high number of anti-discrimination institutions and laws undermines their effectiveness.

In its report, the Council of Europe's anti-racism commission has made several recommendations to the authorities of Austria. The following two require prompt implementation and will be reviewed by ECRI in two years' time:

- merge the various anti-discrimination acts and institutions of the Federation and the Länder in order to improve the protection afforded to victims of racism and discrimination;
- ratify the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems.

The report, including Government observations, was prepared following ECRI's visit to Austria in November 2014 [[Press release](#)] and takes account of developments up to March 2015.

ECRI is a human rights body of the Council of Europe, composed of independent experts, which monitors problems of racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination on grounds such as "race", national/ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, religion and language (racial discrimination); it prepares reports and issues recommendations to member States.

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