Press Release

COUNCIL
OF EUROPE
CONSEIL
DE L'EUROPE

46 members

Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
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
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
San Marino
Serbia and
 Montenegro
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
"The former Yugoslav
 Republic of
 Macedonia"
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom

Council of Europe: Reports on racism in Estonia, Lithuania, Romania and Spain

Strasbourg, 21.02.2006 – The Council of Europe's expert body on combating racism, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), today released four new reports examining racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance in Estonia, Lithuania, Romania and Spain. 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 **Estonia**, the number of stateless people who have obtained Estonian citizenship has been steadily increasing. But Estonia has not developed a consistent policy aimed at bringing the Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking communities together. Estonia has yet to examine the full extent of the Holocaust in Estonia and to give it its rightful place in the national debate. The Roma community in Estonia is still disproportionately affected by unemployment and discrimination in the field of education.

In **Lithuania**, the legal framework against racial discrimination has been strengthened by the adoption of the Law on Equal Opportunities. But the provisions in force to counter racist expression, including incitement to racial hatred, which has notably targeted the Jewish, Roma and Chechen communities, have not been adequately applied. Asylum legislation and practice has undergone an important reform which, in spite of positive elements introduced, has diminished refugee protection in several areas. Instances of antisemitism continue to be a cause of concern to ECRI in Lithuania.

In **Romania**, the authorities have adopted an anti-discrimination law and set up the National Council Against Discrimination, which is the body responsible for applying this law. However, ECRI notes that this legislation has hardly been applied at all as neither public officials nor the general public are aware of its existence. The Roma community continues to be discriminated against in all areas, including the labour market and access to education, public places and decent housing.

In **Spain**, there has been a recent willingness on the part of the authorities to move from an aliens policy to an immigration and integration policy. However, lack of awareness of issues of racism and racial discrimination across Spanish society affects the institutional response to these phenomena in a negative way. Racial discrimination in a wide range of areas, including employment, housing and access to public places still affects the daily lives of members of ethnic minority groups, including Roma, North Africans, people from sub-Saharan Africa and South Americans. Racial and xenophobic violence still needs to be adequately recognised and countered.

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.

To receive our press releases by e-mail, contact : Council.of.Europe.Press@coe.int

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 46 member states.