

**ECRI Round Table in Albania  
Tirana, 2 October 2012**

**Conclusions by Mr Jean-Charles Sacotte, member of ECRI**

I would like to begin by emphasising the value of a round table meeting like this in which everyone has been able to have their say and listen to others. We have taken note of the Albanian authorities' efforts to implement ECRI's recommendations and, more generally speaking, to combat all forms of discrimination.

There has been some progress in this respect:

- Law No. 10221 of February 2010 provides an essential basis for the fight against discrimination. Without legislation, nothing is possible. But legislation is not enough. It has to be applied.
- Another positive point, where it comes to the application of the law, is the existence of two specialised institutions, one a long-standing one, the People's Advocate, the other more recent, the Commissioner for the Protection against Discrimination. Both have described their services and their work and outlined their needs. If we want efficient institutions, we need motivated, active women and men, and we do have them. However, they also need to be given sufficient resources and their recommendations need to be taken into consideration by politicians and followed up. Certain concerns were expressed on this subject.
- We also heard some reservations not about the justice system itself but about the conditions of access to it, which would account for the small number of cases of racism and racial discrimination processed by the judicial system.

In short, it is not enough for equal rights for all citizens to be enshrined in the Constitution and the law. It also has to be possible to exercise them and have them recognised.

Another important point is the matter of statistics:

- In our report, we regretted that there were no reliable statistics in this field, particularly ethnic/equality data.
- Since then, there has been a census and the results will be published shortly, but it would seem, according to a minority representative, that the "ethnic" data it has yielded may not be very accurate.

But over and above everything else, there is one major concern, and that is the situation of the Roma:

- For various reasons, this particularly vulnerable group is almost totally excluded from the ordinary life of Albanians. In spheres such as education, employment, housing and health the Roma are excluded from life in the community.

- There are many reasons for this, but they are often connected with problems with being entered on civil registers. Progress has been made but there are still many obstacles and they are often purely bureaucratic in nature.
- One example which particularly struck me was that to have access to social housing, people have to fulfil 18 conditions which it is absolutely impossible for a Roma to meet.

In the final analysis, I am pleased to note the authorities' good will but I would suggest that this now has to be put into practice through targeted, positive action. This will only be possible by co-ordinating all the efforts at national and local level and involving the authorities and NGOs. It will also need the support of the People's Advocate, who has already taken significant steps, and strong commitment on the part of the persons concerned themselves.

From our viewpoint, this round table and the bilateral meetings held yesterday with the authorities have been very valuable and will enable us to present ECRI's conclusions on the implementation of its interim recommendations next year. We are always ready and willing to continue this dialogue.