

## **EFFECTIVE EDUCATION POLICIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW**

### **PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION IN THE AREA OF EDUCATION**

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Paula Eck-Walters. I work in the secretariat of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). Thank you for this opportunity talk about ECRI's work, in particular in the field of protection from discrimination in the area of education.

Before describing ECRI's work in more detail, I would like to emphasise something that you might already know, that the field of education has been very important for ECRI since it was established in 1993.

#### **A brief résumé of what ECRI is and how it works**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/default_en.asp)

ECRI is the Council of Europe's independent human rights monitoring mechanism specialised in questions related to racism and intolerance. Its task is to combat racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance in the 47 Council of Europe member states, from the perspective of the protection of human rights. ECRI's action covers all necessary measures to combat violence, discrimination and prejudice faced by persons or groups of persons, **on grounds of "race", colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin.**

From its inception ECRI has repeatedly emphasised the importance of education in combating racism and intolerance in its recommendations to member states. On the one hand the importance of equal access to a quality education for all (irrespective of "race", colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin) as a means of ensuring equal opportunities/enabling individuals to achieve their full potential/integration/participation/stake into society, and on the other the role of education itself in combating racism and intolerance/breaking down stereotypes and prejudices, including within schools and other educational establishments themselves, through curricula, textbooks, teaching methods etc.

Protection from discrimination in the area of education and the development of effective education policies for the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (of which combating racism and intolerance are a part) are recurrent themes in two of ECRI's main statutory activities, which are its country monitoring work and its general policy recommendations.

#### **Country monitoring work**

In its country monitoring work, ECRI closely examines the situation in each of the member States of the Council of Europe and draws up suggestions and proposals (addressed to the governments of member states) as to how the problems it has identified might be overcome. Following in-depth research and a country monitoring visit, ECRI drafts a report containing recommendations aiming to assist governments in taking concrete and practical steps to counter racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance. (So reports contain recommendations addressed to governments).

### ***Fourth round***

In 2014, ECRI completed its fourth round of country monitoring work (each round covers 8-10 countries per year and lasts around 5 years). All fourth round reports contained a section on discrimination in various fields, which almost always included recommendations on education. Depending on the situation in the country concerned, these recommendations covered, among others

- Equal opportunities in access to education
- Racist incidents at school
- Training teachers
- Improving the situation of Roma and Egyptian children
- Promoting minority language, culture and religion
- Extension and monitoring of existing initiatives
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Recommendations relating to education are also found in other sections of the reports, such as vulnerable/target groups; international legal instruments (Protocol 12; Convention 111 (unesco or ILO); civil and administrative law; racism in public discourse and racist violence.

For example, ECRI has recommended that national authorities pursue efforts to make schoolchildren aware of the need to combat racist violence and the presence and activities of extremist groups through educational initiatives at school (see p. 28 of the 4<sup>th</sup> round compilation – 4<sup>th</sup> report on Switzerland).

### ***Interim follow-up***

For its fourth round of country monitoring ECRI introduced an interim follow-up mechanism, whereby it requests priority implementation for up to three recommendations and asks the member state concerned to provide information in this connection within two years from the publication of the report. It seems worth pointing out that several of these priority recommendations have concerned education – for example:

- the establishment and extension of pre-school facilities, which enables children with a different mother tongue to the official language to gain proficiency in this before they enter primary school (eg Roma children in Albania);
- finding solutions for the effective, ongoing schooling of itinerant or semi-itinerant Traveller children, adapted to their lifestyle and in consultation with the Traveller community (eg 4<sup>th</sup> report on France).

### ***Fifth round***

In 2013, ECRI began its fifth round of country monitoring. This focuses on certain topics for in-depth analysis in all member states: legislative issues (ratify Protocol 12, general prohibition of discrimination), hate speech, racist and homo/transphobic violence and integration policies. In addition, each report deals with a certain number of topics specific to each country, which will address any other major “racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, antisemitism or intolerance issues in the country concerned. Interim recommendations not implemented or only partially implemented during the fourth cycle will be followed up as well. Finally, under its mandate to monitor intolerance against vulnerable groups, ECRI may address discrimination against LGBT communities in the section on country-specific issues.

Many of ECRI’s findings and recommendations continue to focus on the field of education, in particular in the context of combating hate speech; integration policies and protecting the rights of LGBT persons, particularly adolescents.

For example, with regard to combating discrimination in schools and raising awareness of the right to equal treatment, diversity, discrimination and bullying at school, special attention should be given to teacher training.

Recommendations concerning integration policies, include, among other things,

- the introduction of free of charge preschool for children before entry into mainstream education;
- removing obstacles, including financial, to access to tuition in the national language;
- ensure that the teaching in bilingual schools is of the same standard as in monolingual schools;
- the development of policies to eliminate segregation in education.

Concerning the rights of LGBT persons, ECRI recommends that national authorities implement, in particular in schools, measures to promote mutual understanding and respect for all persons irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity, such as adapting school curricula to include LGBT issues from the angle of the intolerance and discrimination that LGBT persons can suffer, train teachers on how to address this topic and produce official teaching material appropriate to this question.

**Good practices are referred to in ECRI's country reports, such as the employment of Roma mediators and measures to promote and facilitate Roma students access to higher education.**

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## **GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

ECRI's General Policy Recommendations (GPRs) are addressed to the governments of all member states, they cover important areas of current concern in the fight against racism and intolerance. They are intended to serve as guidelines for policy-makers when drawing up national strategies, programmes and projects. ECRI's choice of theme for a general policy recommendation is inspired by the overall findings of its country monitoring work, so they are addressed to the governments of all Council of Europe member states rather than of individual countries. One of its GPRs specifically concerns education and many others refer to education.

### **ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.10: Combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N10/eng-recommendation%20nr%2010.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N10/eng-recommendation%20nr%2010.pdf)

ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No.10 on combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education proposes specific measures to member States for ensuring compulsory, free and quality education for all; for combating racism and racial discrimination at school; and for training members of the teaching profession to work in a multicultural environment. For this purpose ECRI recommends the setting-up of a racist incidents monitoring system as well as awareness-raising and disciplinary measures for combating racism and racial discrimination at school.

Education, both equal access to quality education and education to combat racism and intolerance/human rights education, is referred to in several other General Policy Recommendations, in particular:

**ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 13 ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No.13 on combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N13/e-RPG%2013%20-%20A4.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N13/e-RPG%2013%20-%20A4.pdf)

ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No.13 on combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma reinforces its General Policy Recommendation No.3, in response to a worsening of the situation of Europe's Roma population. In this hand, to ensure the access of Roma to education, employment and other goods recommendation, ECRI calls on member states to adopt no less than 90 measures: on the one and services; and, on the other hand, to combat hate speech, racist crimes and violence against Roma, through both the application of criminal law provisions and preventive and awareness-raising measures. Finally, it emphasises that only a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to Roma issues, involving Roma representatives at all levels of policy-making (conception, development, implementation and evaluation) can enhance mutual trust and contribute to the fight against anti-Gypsyism. Section 4 of this GPR is devoted to combating anti-Gypsyism in the field of education, and recommends that states implement the following measures to this end:

- a. give the implementation of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No.10 on combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education high priority;
- b. take measures for preventing and combating stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination experienced by Roma children in schools, by making parents of non-Roma children aware of it and by training teaching staff in particular for intercultural education;
- c. include teaching on the Roma genocide ("Parrajimos") in school curricula;
- d. take urgent measures, including legal and political ones, to put an end to the segregation at school which Roma children are subjected to, and integrate them into schools attended by pupils from the majority population;
- e. abolish the too-frequent placement of Roma children in special schools, making sure that Roma pupils not afflicted with mental disorders are spared such placement and that those already placed are speedily enrolled in ordinary schools;
- f. combat, through sanctions, the harassment inflicted on Roma pupils at school;
- g. take all appropriate measures to combat absenteeism and dropping-out among Roma children;
- h. carry out actions aimed at increasing Roma parents' awareness of the importance of nursery school, of preventing dropping-out, and of giving priority to their children's education;
- i. eliminate every financial and administrative obstacle to the access of Roma children to education;
- j. ensure that each Roma child has genuine access to nursery school;
- k. recruit school mediators, including among Roma to ensure a liaison between the school and Roma parents;
- l. ensure that a large number of Roma join the teaching profession to aid the school integration of Roma children;
- m. provide Roma pupils in need of it with preparatory and additional instruction in the official language(s);
- n. offer Roma pupils instruction in their mother tongue, upon the parents' request;
- o. take measures to ensure continuous schooling for children from travelling communities;
- p. facilitate access to life-long education for adult Roma desiring it;
- q. ensure that school textbooks do not convey stereotypes on Roma and do contain information on Roma language, culture and history and present the benefits brought by Roma to society;
- r. ensure that cases of discrimination against Roma in the sphere of education are prosecuted and punished;

The following ECRI General Policy Recommendations also refer to education:

**ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.1: Combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N1/Rec01en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N1/Rec01en.pdf)

**ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°3 on combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N3/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N3/default_en.asp)

**General policy recommendation n° 5: Combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N5/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N5/default_en.asp)

**ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°6: Combating the dissemination of racist, xenophobic and antisemitic material via the internet**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N6/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N6/default_en.asp)

**ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N7/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N7/default_en.asp)

**ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°8 on combating racism while fighting terrorism**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N8/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N8/default_en.asp)

**ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°9 on the fight against antisemitism**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N9/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N9/default_en.asp)

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## **CURRENT CHALLENGES**

In its last annual report (covering 2015), ECRI noted that the need for education and awareness-raising to combat hate crime and discrimination remained high and referred in particular to young people in the context of the following challenges:

- increasing antisemitism;
- increasing Islamophobia (as well as the radicalisation of young people);
- intolerance, hate speech, violence, discrimination against LGBT persons;
- the continued existence of segregation in schools affecting Roma children, in spite of ECHR judgments to end such practices.
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Integration strategies require sufficient funding and to be informed by quality data, including to avoid lower levels of education for newly arrived migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

Education should continue to play a role in counteracting the discourse of xenophobic hate speech. Another current problem – access to education of newly arriving migrant and refugee children (documented in recent NGO reports referring to the situation in Turkey).

## **CO-OPERATION**

ECRI's secretariat to ensure consultation of and possibly referral to work concerning education for democratic citizenship and human rights education.

Could the network facilitate knowledge and use of ECRI's work?