

ECRI

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
Commission européenne contre le racisme et l'intolérance

ECRI's Round Table in Ireland

Morrison Hotel
Dublin, 15 November 2007

EXPLANATORY NOTE

ECRI's Round Table in Ireland is part of a series of national round tables in the member States of the Council of Europe, which are organised by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in the framework of its Programme of action on relations with civil society.

These national round tables are regularly organised following the publication of ECRI's country monitoring reports, in which ECRI thoroughly analyses the situation as regards racism and intolerance in each country and makes suggestions and proposals as to how to tackle the problems identified.

The main aim of these round tables is to encourage reflection in the governmental and non-governmental circles concerned, by bringing together the relevant national actors in this field, including government officials, representatives of national human rights institutions, representatives of local and regional authorities, parliamentarians, victims of discrimination, academics, NGOs etc. The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities that recently published its Opinion on Ireland, which examines in more depth the situation of the Traveller community in Ireland will also participate in the event. The objective of this round table is to develop together ideas as to how to solve the problems of racism in the country and to ensure the implementation of ECRI's and the Advisory Committee's specific recommendations.

The main themes of ECRI's Round Table in Ireland are: (1) ECRI's report on Ireland; (2) promoting equality and diversity in the workplace; (3) safeguarding the rights of the traveller community under the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities and (4) building an integrated society in Ireland.

In its [third Report on Ireland](#), ECRI acknowledges that in recent years, Ireland has made progress in a number of the fields covered in this report. For example, Ireland adopted the European Convention on Human Rights Act in 2003 to enable persons under Irish jurisdiction to invoke the Convention before the courts. Furthermore, a National Action Plan Against Racism was launched in 2005 and a new Garda (police) Ombudsman Commission which has the power to, inter alia, investigate complaints against police officers, including for racial discrimination, was created. Finally, ECRI is satisfied that some initiatives have been taken to integrate Travellers into society in areas such as education and health care.

At the same time ECRI observes that further measures are needed to raise members of minority groups' awareness of existing mechanisms for seeking redress against racism and racial discrimination. There is also still a need for the establishment of policies aimed at integrating asylum seekers and refugees into Irish society. Furthermore, according to ECRI,

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the increase in demand for non-denominational or multi-faith schools should be met. Finally, measures for integrating Travellers into society need to be reinforced, in particular in the area of employment.

All of these issues will be discussed with representatives of the responsible governmental agencies and victims of discrimination in the light of the existing legislative and institutional framework for combating racism and racial discrimination in Ireland, including the new **Equal Status Act**. A whole session will deal with the issue of promoting **equality and diversity in the work place** with contributions from the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Session III will be entirely dedicated to the follow-up given to the recommendations given by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities regarding the Irish **Traveller community**. Finally, special attention will also be paid to initiatives for building an **integrated society** in Ireland, like for example, the **National Action Plan Against Racism**, with a special emphasis on initiatives to promote the active participation of minority groups in decision-making and public life.

ECRI hopes that an open debate among all relevant actors on these important issues will help to identify together effective ways of better implementing existing initiatives and will also provide the necessary impetus for further reform in Ireland.