

ECRI

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

ECRI's Round Table in Poland

Palace of the Ministry of Culture
Warsaw, 8 November 2005

BRIEFING PAPER

[Polish version](#)

ECRI's Round Table in Poland is part of a series of national Round Tables in the member States of the Council of Europe, which are organised in the framework of ECRI's Programme of Action on relations with civil society.

The reasoning behind this Programme of Action is that racism and intolerance can only be successfully countered if civil society is actively engaged in this fight: tackling racism and intolerance requires not only action on the part of governments (to whom ECRI's recommendations are addressed), but also the full involvement of civil society. ECRI attaches great importance to ensuring that its anti-racism message filters down to the whole of civil society, and also to involving the various sectors of society in an intercultural dialogue based on mutual respect.

The main themes of this Round Table are: (1) ECRI's report on Poland; (2) racism and xenophobia in public discourse and in public sphere; (3) combating racism and racial discrimination against Roma (4) and the legislative and institutional framework for combating racism and racial discrimination in Poland.

In its recently published [Report on Poland](#), ECRI acknowledges that over recent years, Poland has made progress in a number of the fields covered in this report. This includes that the Polish authorities have started to raise the awareness of the police and the judiciary to the need to combat racist offences more effectively and that they have launched and supported many initiatives to combat antisemitism, particularly in schools. ECRI notes also with satisfaction that the Polish authorities have adopted a Programme for the Roma community in Poland in 2003 and a Programme for Countering Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Poland in 2004.

At the same time ECRI observes that in Poland the police and the prosecutors do not give sufficient attention to the racist motivation of an offence even though there are reports of racial incidents occurring against members of minority groups such as immigrants and Roma. Cases of racial hatred are rarely investigated and prosecuted while publications containing racist and particularly antisemitic material are still available on the market. In this context it is also a matter of concern of ECRI that there is still no

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comprehensive body of civil and administrative legislation prohibiting racial discrimination in all fields of life. Finally, ECRI is worried about evidence of latent social attitudes which result in an underestimation of the seriousness of issues of intolerance and discrimination and of the need for corrective action.

All of these issues will be discussed with representatives of the responsible governmental agencies and victims of discrimination in the light of [ECRI's General Policy Recommendation no.7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination](#) and the recently established legislative and institutional framework for combating racism and racial discrimination in Poland. A whole session will be dedicated to combating racism and racial discrimination against **Roma**, with a special emphasis on the practical implementation of the Programme for the Roma community in Poland 2004-2013. Finally, also the dangers of **racism and xenophobia in public discourse and in the public sphere** will be analysed in more detail by renowned experts in this field.

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 Poland.