ECRI

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

ECRI's Round Table in Slovenia
White Hall of the Grand Hotel Union
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BRIEFING PAPER

ECRI's Round Table in Slovenia is part of a series of national Round Tables in the member States of the Council of Europe, which are organized in the framework of ECRI's Programme of Action on Relations with Civil Society.

The reasoning behind this new 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 Slovenia; (2) national legislation to combat discrimination; (3) ex-Yugoslav minority groups in Slovenia; and (4) racism and xenophobia in public discourse.

In its recently published Report on Slovenia, ECRI acknowledges that over recent years, Slovenia has taken a number of steps to combat racism and intolerance. This includes the adoption of measures protecting the rights of the Italian and Hungarian national minorities, initiatives to improve the situation of refugees under a temporary protection status, measures to facilitate access to citizenship and education and employment programmes for members of the Roma community.

At the same time ECRI observes that problems of racism and intolerance persist and that improvements in the situation of the ex-Yugoslav minority groups, many members of whom are still non-citizens, will depend on the speed and efficiency of implementing the new legislation. Furthermore, there still exists a certain level of prejudice and intolerance among the Slovenian population towards those who are different from the majority. In certain areas, the Roma population is faced with economic and social difficulties, which make its members vulnerable to discrimination. Finally, ECRI also noted the lack of a comprehensive body of anti-discrimination legislation.

All those issues will be discussed with representatives of the responsible governmental agencies and the victims of discrimination in the light of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation no.7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination, the amended **Law on the Regularisation of the Status of Citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic** and recent initiatives by the **Office for Immigration and Refugees** for the integration of non-citizens in Slovenia. Particular emphasis will be also put on the

future creation of a **specialised body in combating racism and intolerance**, as recommended in ECRI's last report on Slovenia.

ECRI hopes that an open debate among all relevant actors on these extremely important issues will help to identify together effective ways of better implementing existing initiatives and will also give impulses for further reform in Slovenia.

Finally, this Round Table also acknowledges the important role that the media play in the fight against racism and intolerance. The mass media have a unique position in society: the way in which they create and disseminate common cultural references may have an important influence on people's attitudes. Media representations of the different groups in society, the way they portray relationships between these groups and the way in which they report incidents, may, in some cases, fuel stereotypes, prejudices and racist discourse -often unintentionally- rather then combating these phenomena. Media reporting needs therefore to be especially sensitive when it comes to ethnic, cultural and religious relations in society.