

ECRI

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

ECRI's Round Table in Turkey

**GALATASARAY Lisesi
Istanbul, 14 June 2005**

BRIEFING PAPER

	Turkish version (pdf)
--	---------------------------------------

ECRI's Round Table in Turkey 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 Turkey; (2) the legislative and institutional framework for combating racism and racial discrimination in Turkey (3) the situation of vulnerable groups and (4) asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey.

In its recently published [Report on Turkey](#), ECRI acknowledges that over recent years, Turkey has made progress in a number of the fields covered in this report. This includes the introduction of major constitutional and legislative reforms, aimed at reinforcing fundamental rights and freedoms and combating racism and racial discrimination more effectively. ECRI observes some progress as regards freedom of expression, particularly in languages other than Turkish, freedom of assembly and freedom of association for members of ethnic and religious minority groups. Finally, ECRI notes with satisfaction that public officials have been given training in human rights and local human rights bodies set up.

At the same time ECRI observes that in Turkey, despite the reforms, there are still some gaps in the constitution and in criminal, civil and administrative laws as regards action against racism and racial discrimination. There is still room for improvement in the matter of religious freedom, in particular as regards removing the reference to religion on identity cards and abolishing compulsory religious education in schools. Finally, ECRI is concerned that no sanctions have been taken against intolerant expressions and acts directed at minority groups by sections of the media and members of the public and there is still no national specialised body to combat racism and intolerance.

ECRI

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

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 existing legislative and institutional framework for combating racism and racial discrimination in Turkey. A whole session will be dedicated to the situation of **vulnerable groups** in Turkey and the challenges faced by them in living in a diverse society. Particular emphasis will be also put on the future creation of a **specialised body for combating racism and intolerance**, as recommended in ECRI's last report on Turkey.

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 Turkey.