

Press Release – 24.05.2007

## **Council of Europe: Reports on racism in Azerbaijan, Finland, Ireland and Monaco**

Strasbourg, 24.05.2007 – The Council of Europe's expert body on combating racism, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), today released four new reports examining racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance in Azerbaijan, Finland, Ireland and Monaco. ECRI recognises that positive developments have occurred in all four of these Council of Europe member countries. At the same time, however, the reports detail continuing grounds for concern for the Commission:

In **Azerbaijan**, access to public school for children of non-citizens without legal status has been improved. But there are still cases of racist and inflammatory speech or the promotion of religious intolerance by some media, members of the general public and politicians. In general, there is a lack of awareness on the part of the Azerbaijani population on the problem of racism and intolerance in Azerbaijan and of the relevant existing criminal, civil and administrative law provision aimed at combating such phenomena.

**Finland** has ratified Protocol No.12 to the European Convention on Human Rights and strengthened its legal and institutional frameworks against racism and racial discrimination. But there is a need for a more consistent public commitment against racism and racial discrimination in all its forms in order to promote genuine ownership by society as a whole of the fight against these phenomena. The implementation of the existing institutional and legal frameworks against racism and racial discrimination still needs to be improved, including through evaluation measures.

In **Ireland**, a National Action Plan Against Racism was launched in 2005, and a number of recommendations made by the Human Rights Audit on the police force regarding combating racism and racial discrimination are currently being implemented. But the criminal legislation has not been amended to include sufficiently strong provisions for combating racist acts which affect in particular visible minorities and Travellers. Further measures are necessary to raise members of minority groups' awareness of existing mechanisms for seeking redress against racism and racial discrimination.

In **Monaco**, the authorities have enacted a law on freedom of public expression, which punishes incitement to racial hatred. But the Principality still needs to adopt anti-discrimination provisions in civil and administrative law as well as criminal law provisions for punishing racist acts. The racist motivation of a crime is not regarded as an aggravating circumstance at the time of sentencing. Procedural safeguards are needed with regard to persons subject to a turning back or deportation order.

These new reports form part of a third monitoring cycle of Council of Europe member states' laws, policies and practices aimed at combating racism. ECRI's country-specific reports are available in English, French and the national language of the country concerned at <http://www.coe.int/ecri>. They cover all member states on an equal footing, from the perspective of protecting human rights. They examine whether ECRI's main recommendations from previous reports have been followed and, if so, to what degree of success and effectiveness.