

**ECRI GENERAL POLICY
RECOMMENDATION No. 3**

**ON
COMBATING RACISM AND INTOLERANCE
AGAINST ROMA/GYPSIES**

ADOPTED ON 6 MARCH 1998

Strasbourg, 1998



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance:

Recalling the decision adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Council of Europe at their first Summit held in Vienna on 8-9 October 1993;

Recalling that the Plan of Action on combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance set out as part of this Declaration invited the Committee of Ministers to establish the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance with a mandate, *inter alia*, to formulate General Policy Recommendations to member States;

Recalling also the Final Declaration and Action Plan adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Council of Europe at their second Summit held in Strasbourg on 10-11 October 1997;

Stressing that this Final Declaration confirms that the goal of the member States of the Council of Europe is to build a freer, more tolerant and just European society and that it calls for the intensification of the fight against racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance;

Noting the proposal concerning the nomination of a European mediator for Roma/Gypsies contained in Recommendation N° 1203 (1993) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;

Bearing in mind the conclusions of the human dimension seminar on Roma in the CSCE (OSCE) region organised on 20-23 September 1994 by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), in close consultation with the Council of Europe and the continuing co-operation between the two Organisations in this field;

Welcoming the nomination by the Secretary General in 1994 of a Co-ordinator of Council of Europe Activities on Roma/Gypsies;

Bearing in mind the work of the Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies (MG-S-ROM);

Recalling Recommendation N° R (97) 21 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the media and the promotion of a climate of tolerance;

Recalling the provisions contained in ECRI's General Policy Recommendation N° 1, which sought to assist member States in combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance effectively, by proposing concrete and specific measures in a limited number of particularly pertinent areas;

Profoundly convinced that Europe is a community of shared values, including that of the equal dignity of all human beings, and that respect for this equal dignity is the cornerstone of all democratic societies;

Recalling that the legacy of Europe's history is a duty to remember the past by remaining vigilant and actively opposing any manifestations of racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance;

Paying homage to the memory of all the victims of policies of racist persecution and extermination during the Second World War and remembering that a considerable number of Roma/Gypsies perished as a result of such policies;

Stressing in this respect that the Council of Europe is the embodiment and guardian of the founding values - in particular the protection and promotion of human rights - around which Europe was rebuilt after the horrors of the Second World War;

Recalling that combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance forms an integral part of the protection and promotion of human rights, that these rights are universal and indivisible, and that all human beings, without any distinction whatsoever, are entitled to these rights;

Stressing that combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance is above all a matter of protecting the rights of vulnerable members of society;

Convinced that in any action to combat racism and discrimination, emphasis should be placed on the victim and the improvement of his or her situation;

Noting that Roma/Gypsies suffer throughout Europe from persisting prejudices, are victims of a racism which is deeply-rooted in society, are the target of sometimes violent demonstrations of racism and intolerance and that their fundamental rights are regularly violated or threatened;

Noting also that the persisting prejudices against Roma/Gypsies lead to discrimination against them in many fields of social and economic life, and that such discrimination is a major factor in the process of social exclusion affecting many Roma/Gypsies;

Convinced that the promotion of the principle of tolerance is a guarantee of the preservation of open and pluralistic societies allowing for a peaceful co-existence;

recommends the following to Governments of member States:

- to sign and ratify the relevant international legal instruments in the field of combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance, particularly the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;
- to ensure that the name used officially for the various Roma/Gypsy communities should be the name by which the community in question wishes to be known;

bearing in mind the manifestations of racism and intolerance of which Roma/Gypsies are victims, to give a high priority to the effective implementation of the provisions contained in ECRI's General Policy Recommendation N° 1, which requests that the necessary measures should be taken to ensure that national criminal, civil and administrative law expressly and specifically counter racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance;

to ensure that discrimination as such, as well as discriminatory practices, are combated through adequate legislation and to introduce into civil law specific provisions to this end, particularly in the fields of employment, housing and education;

to render illegal any discrimination on the part of public authorities in the exercise of their duties;

to ensure that suitable legal aid be provided for Roma/Gypsies who have been victims of discrimination and who wish to take legal action;

- to take the appropriate measures to ensure that justice is fully and promptly done in cases concerning violations of the fundamental rights of Roma/Gypsies;

- to ensure in particular that no degree of impunity is tolerated as regards crimes committed against Roma/Gypsies and to let this be clearly known among the general public;
- to set up and support specific training schemes for persons involved at all levels in the various components of the administration of justice, with a view to promoting cultural understanding and an awareness of prejudice;
- to encourage the development of appropriate arrangements for dialogue between the police, local authorities and Roma/Gypsy communities;
- to encourage awareness-raising among media professionals, both in the audiovisual field and in the written press, of the particular responsibility they bear in not transmitting prejudices when practising their profession, and in particular in avoiding reporting incidents involving individuals who happen to be members of the Roma/Gypsy community in a way which blames the Roma/Gypsy community as a whole;
- to take the necessary steps to ensure that rules concerning the issue of *de jure* and *de facto* access to citizenship and the right to asylum are drawn up and applied so as not to lead to particular discrimination against Roma/Gypsies;
- to ensure that the questions relating to "travelling" within a country, in particular regulations concerning residence and town planning, are solved in a way which does not hinder the way of life of the persons concerned;
- to develop institutional arrangements to promote an active role and participation of Roma/Gypsy communities in the decision-making process, through national, regional and local consultative mechanisms, with priority placed on the idea of partnership on an equal footing;
- to take specific measures to encourage the training of Roma/Gypsies, to ensure full knowledge and implementation of their rights and of the functioning of the legal system;
- to pay particular attention to the situation of Roma/Gypsy women, who are often the subject of double discrimination, as women and as Roma/Gypsies;
- to vigorously combat all forms of school segregation towards Roma/Gypsy children and to ensure the effective enjoyment of equal access to education;
- to introduce into the curricula of all schools information on the history and culture of Roma/Gypsies and to provide training programmes in this subject for teachers;
- to support the activities of non-governmental organisations, which play an important role in combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies and which provide them in particular with appropriate legal assistance;
- to encourage Roma/Gypsy organisations to play an active role, with a view to strengthening civil society;
- to develop confidence-building measures to preserve and strengthen an open and pluralistic society with a view to a peaceful co-existence.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe is a political organisation which was founded on 5 May 1949 by ten European countries in order to promote greater unity between its members. It now numbers 47 European States.¹

The main aims of the Organisation are to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and to develop common responses to political, social, cultural and legal challenges in its member States.

The Council of Europe has its permanent headquarters in Strasbourg (France). By Statute, it has two constituent organs: the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe represents the entities of local and regional self-government within the member States.

The European Court of Human Rights is the judicial body competent to adjudicate complaints brought against a State by individuals, associations or other contracting States on grounds of violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION AGAINST RACISM AND INTOLERANCE

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) is a monitoring body established by the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Council of Europe. The decision to establish ECRI is contained in the Vienna Declaration adopted by the first Summit on 9 October 1993. The European Conference against Racism, held in Strasbourg in October 2000, called for the strengthening of ECRI's action. On 13 June 2002, the Committee of Ministers adopted a new Statute for ECRI, consolidating its role as an independent human rights monitoring body on issues related to racism and racial discrimination.

The members of ECRI serve in their individual capacity and are independent. The task of ECRI is to combat racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance at the level of greater Europe and from the perspective of the protection of human rights. ECRI's action covers all necessary measures to combat violence, discrimination and prejudice faced by persons or groups of persons, notably on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin.

ECRI's statutory activities are: country-by-country monitoring; elaboration of General Policy Recommendations; relations with civil society.

For further information on ECRI and its activities, please contact:

*Secretariat of the European Commission against
Racism and Intolerance
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg cedex
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 29 64 - Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 87
E-mail: combat.racism@coe.int
Website: www.coe.int/ecri*

¹ Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

