

ECRI Declaration on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse (adopted on 17 March 2005)

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), being firmly convinced that tolerance and pluralism are at the foundation of genuinely democratic societies and that diversity considerably enriches these societies:

Condemns the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse

Stresses that such discourse is ethically unacceptable

Recalls Europe's history, which shows that political discourse that promotes religious, ethnic or cultural prejudice and hatred considerably threatens social peace and political stability and inevitably leads to suffering for entire populations

Is alarmed at the consequences that this type of discourse is having on the general climate of public opinion in Europe

Is deeply concerned that the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic political discourse is no longer confined to extremist political parties, but is increasingly infecting mainstream political parties, at the risk of legitimising and trivialising this type of discourse

Notes with serious concern that this type of discourse conveys prejudices and stereotypes in respect of non-citizens and minority groups and strengthens the racist and xenophobic content of debates on immigration and asylum

Notes with serious concern that this type of discourse often conveys a distorted image of Islam, intended to portray this religion as a threat, and that antisemitism continues to be encouraged, openly or in a coded manner, by certain political leaders and parties

ECRI deplores the fact that, as a result of the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic political discourse:

Ill considered measures which impact disproportionately on particular groups or affect the latter's effective enjoyment of human rights are being adopted

The long term cohesion of society is damaged

Racial discrimination gains ground

Racist violence is encouraged

Faced with this situation, ECRI stresses that political parties can play an essential role in combating racism, by shaping and guiding public opinion in a positive fashion. It suggests the following practical measures:

Self-regulatory measures which can be taken by political parties or national parliaments

The signature and implementation by European political parties of the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society which encourages a responsible

ECRI

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

attitude towards problems of racism, whether it concerns the actual organisation of the parties, or their activities in the political arena

Effective implementation of criminal law provisions against racist offences (including those establishing racist motivation as an aggravating circumstance) and racial discrimination, which are applicable to all individuals

The adoption and implementation of provisions penalising the leadership of any group that promotes racism, as well as support for such groups and participation in their activities

The establishment of an obligation to suppress public financing of organisations which promote racism, including public financing of political parties

ECRI calls on political parties to formulate a clear political message in favour of diversity in European societies.

ECRI calls above all for courageous and effective political leadership which respects and promotes human rights.