

# ECRI

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

## ECRI's Round Table in Switzerland

Hotel Bern  
Bern, Tuesday 15 June 2004

### BRIEFING PAPER

[German version](#)

ECRI's Round Table in Switzerland 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 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 Switzerland; (2) racism and xenophobia in public discourse and in public sphere (3) national legislation to combat discrimination; and (4) the situation of non-citizens residing in Switzerland.

In its recently published [Report on Switzerland](#) ECRI acknowledges that over recent years, Switzerland has taken a number of steps to combat racism and intolerance. This includes the coming into force of a new constitution, containing a prohibition of discrimination, the setting up of a Federal Service to Combat Racism and the introduction of a new Law on Itinerant Trade for the Jenisch, Sinti and Roma.

At the same time ECRI observes that problems of racism and intolerance persist and that the incidence of police misbehaviour and discriminatory treatment towards members of certain minority groups, notably black Africans, is a matter of concern, as is the general climate of opinion in society towards this group. The issue of asylum-seekers and refugees is also the subject of negative and hostile

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debate in public and political spheres, and a number of problems remain in the field of the asylum procedure. 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 new **Law on Foreigners and Citizenship** and initiatives taken by the **Federal Commission against Racism** and the newly created **Federal Service to combat Racism**. A special emphasis will be also put on the **situation of non-citizens** residing in Switzerland and corresponding **integration policies at local and cantonal level**.

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 Switzerland.