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**ECRI CONCLUSIONS
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS
IN RESPECT OF BULGARIA
SUBJECT TO INTERIM FOLLOW-UP**

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¹ Any developments which occurred after 9 November 2016, date on which the latest information on measures taken to implement the recommendations chosen for interim follow-up was received, are not taken into account in this analysis.

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FOREWORD

As part of its fifth round of monitoring work, ECRI has renewed its process of interim follow-up with respect to two specific recommendations made in each of its country reports.

In line with the Information Document on ECRI's fifth monitoring cycle brought to the attention of the Ministers' Deputies on 14 November 2012,¹ not later than two years following the publication of each report, ECRI addresses a communication to the Government concerned asking what has been done in respect of the specific recommendations for which priority follow-up was requested.

At the same time, ECRI gathers relevant information itself. On the basis of this information and the response from the Government, ECRI draws up its conclusions on the way in which its recommendations have been followed up.

It should be noted that these conclusions concern only the specific interim recommendations and do not aim at providing a comprehensive analysis of all developments in the fight against racism and intolerance in the State concerned.

¹ CM/Del/Dec(2012)1154/4.2.

1. *In its report on Bulgaria (fifth monitoring cycle) published on 16 September 2014, ECRI strongly recommended that the authorities urgently organise an awareness-raising campaign promoting a positive image of and tolerance for asylum seekers and refugees and ensuring that the public understands the need for international protection.*

ECRI recalls that the above recommendation was made in the context of the extremely tense situation throughout Bulgaria in the final months of 2013 with an explosion of xenophobic hate speech, fuelled by certain politicians, against refugees who had entered the country in large numbers as a consequence of the conflict in Syria.

ECRI notes that the situation for asylum seekers and refugees has not improved since then and that organised anti-migrant protests have sparked tensions between local residents and refugees. For example, in November 2016, riots broke out in the refugee reception centre in the town of Harmanli when quarantine measures were put in place, reportedly to stop the spread of infectious diseases following complaints from locals.

Regrettably, no relevant information indicating implementation of the above recommendation was provided by the authorities, the national specialised body, international organisations or civil society. ECRI concludes, therefore, that its recommendation has not been implemented.

In view of the high levels of intolerance for asylum seekers and refugees in Bulgaria, it calls upon the authorities to take urgent action.

2. *In its report on Bulgaria (fifth monitoring cycle), ECRI recommended that the Commission for Protection against Discrimination produces and publishes information about discrimination, and explaining the procedures for discrimination complaints, in a variety of languages used in the country and disseminates it widely.*

In its fifth report, ECRI noted that booklets and information leaflets about the Anti-Discrimination Act were only available in Bulgarian and some in English, and that the only language permitted for filing complaints was Bulgarian. ECRI was concerned that this hindered access to justice of the most vulnerable groups in the country.

Since then, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) has provided information relating to dissemination of information, the work of regional offices, and various projects and trainings. However, no mention was made about information produced and disseminated in the various languages used in the country.

ECRI notes that the website of the CPD now provides information in Bulgarian, English, French, German and Russian and users can click on the relevant flag or select one of these languages. While it welcomes this improvement, it regrets that Turkish has not been included as one of the languages in which information is provided.

As concerns information about submitting a complaint, the website of the CPD contains a built-in translation tool which converts the information into an extensive list of world languages. ECRI considers this simple innovation most ingenious; even if the automatic translations are far from perfect, they still manage to convey the essential information. On the other hand, it is clearly stated that any complaint written in a foreign language must be accompanied by a translation into Bulgarian, which limits the possibilities of certain vulnerable groups to submit a discrimination complaint.

Overall, ECRI considers that its recommendation has been partially implemented.

