

97th Plenary meeting of ECRI

19 March 2025, Strasbourg

Intervention by Theodoros Rousopoulos
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Mr Chair, Distinguished members of ECRI,

Is Europe only a word common to the titles of our institutions?

Is Europe only a continent, or perhaps something beyond geographical borders?

No doubt, it is the latter.

Europe consists of ideals that are spread to the rest of the world, to different neighborhoods of our blue planet. Shared values of a civilization that invented democracy and taught equality and prosperity. Not always, of course.

European history was built not only on good days. Wars, inequalities, injustice, and cruelty were left behind, especially after the Second World War.

The Council of Europe was founded to be the beacon of principles, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

You, the ECRI, are one of the CoE's most invaluable assets— a monitoring body and a permanent forum for independent experts to discuss ideas and approaches and design specific measures, offering concrete recommendations to legislators and policymakers.

These are my initial remarks.

Now allow me to read a piece of a story published just yesterday on the front page of The New York Times. There are people who are supposed to protect these women. Though combating racism and intolerance is a priority for you and our Assembly in our European countries, members of the CoE, this story is shocking and must demand our attention.

[...]

Similar stories, I am sure, you are monitoring as a result of anti-Black racism in Europe. The faces of racism are many: anti-Gypsyism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and hate speech.

Dear participants, history teaches us that every war has a beginning and an end. But still, the war for survival in a hostile environment never ends. Every day, battles are fought by you and our Assembly, which is fully supportive.

We are just two days away from the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Assembly is marking this day, and the entire week as an anti-racism week, through various initiatives. The No Hate Parliamentary Alliance has launched a social media campaign, which I have fully supported.

I was happy to find myself side by side with you, dear Bertil. I hope that our messages, spread through social media, will raise awareness and lead to action!

I am convinced that ECRI and the Parliamentary Assembly are well-equipped to meet the new, multifaceted challenges that our European democracies must face.

Thank you.