ECRI

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

CRI (2002) 5

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

SECOND REPORT ON ROMANIA

Adopted on 22 June 2001

Strasbourg, 23 April 2002

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Foreword

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) is a body of the Council of Europe, composed of independent members. Its aim is to combat racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance at a pan-European level and from the angle of the protection of human rights.

One of the pillars of ECRI's work programme is its country-by-country approach, whereby it analyses the situation as regards racism and intolerance in each of the member States of the Council of Europe and makes suggestions and proposals as to how to tackle the problems identified.

At the end of 1998, ECRI finished the first round of its country-by-country reports for all member States. ECRI's first report on Romania is dated 6 March 1998 (published in March 1999). The second stage of the country-by-country work, initiated in January 1999, involves the preparation of a second report on each member State. The aim of these second reports is to follow-up the proposals made in the first reports, to update the information contained therein, and to provide a more in-depth analysis of certain issues of particular interest in the country in question.

An important stage in ECRI's country-by-country work is a process of confidential dialogue with the national authorities of the country in question before the final adoption of the report. A new procedure in the second round of country reports is the organisation of a contact visit for the ECRI rapporteurs prior to the drafting of the second report.

The contact visit to Romania took place on 8-11 May 2001. During this visit, the rapporteurs met with representatives of various ministries and public administrations responsible for issues relating to ECRI's mandate. ECRI warmly thanks the Romanian national authorities for their wholehearted co-operation in the organisation of the contact visit, and in particular would like to thank all the persons who met its delegation each of whom provided much valuable information on their own field of competence. ECRI would also like to thank the Romanian national liaison officer whose efficiency and collaboration were much appreciated by ECRI's rapporteurs.

Furthermore, ECRI would like to thank all the representatives of non-governmental organisations with whom its rapporteurs met during the contact visit for the very useful contribution they made to the exercise.

The following report was drawn up by ECRI under its own responsibility. It covers the situation as of 22 June 2001 and any development subsequent to this date is not covered in the following analysis nor taken into account in the conclusions and proposals made by ECRI.

Executive Summary

Romania has recently taken a number of steps to combat racism and discrimination, including the introduction of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, the development of a strategy to improve the situation of the Roma community, and some measures to address the problem of police misbehaviour towards members of minority groups. Such measures demonstrate an acknowledgement on the part of the authorities that problems of racism and intolerance exist in Romania and need to be addressed; in this respect, co-operation between the authorities and representatives of civil society has been improved and represents a positive trend which ECRI welcomes.

However, problems persist as regards the lack of implementation of the legislative provisions to combat racism and discrimination, particularly in the field of criminal law, and as regards the climate of opinion in the country, reflected in certain political circles and in the media. The Roma/Gypsy community remains particularly disadvantaged in all fields of life and faces a significant level of discrimination; notably, the problem of police misbehaviour towards members of this minority group has not yet been entirely solved.

In the following report, ECRI recommends to the Romanian authorities that further action be taken in a number of areas within ECRI's mandate. These recommendations cover, inter alia, the need to ensure that relevant legislation is consistently and rigorously applied, the need to take further action to reduce the incidence of police misbehaviour and abuses as regards certain minority groups, notably the Roma/Gypsy community, and the need to address the continuing persistence of prejudices and stereotypes within society towards members of minority groups as reflected in certain political discourse and in the media.

SECTION I: OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

A. International Legal Instruments

1. Romania has ratified many of the international conventions of relevance to the fight against racism and intolerance. As recommended in ECRI's first report, Romania ratified the revised Social Charter in 1999. Romania has also signed Protocol 12 to the European Convention of Human Rights: ECRI urges the Romanian authorities to ratify this Protocol as swiftly as possible. ECRI also reiterates its recommendation that the Romanian authorities make a declaration under Article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by which States accept the competence of the Committee on Racial Discrimination to receive individual complaints. ECRI moreover recommends that the Romanian authorities ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the European Convention on Nationality, which are already signed, and that they sign and ratify the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers and the European Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level.

2. In conformity with Articles 11 and 20 of the Constitution, international instruments ratified by Parliament form an integral part of domestic legislation and as such are directly applicable. Provisions relating to human rights have primacy over domestic legislation in case of discrepancy.

B. Constitutional provisions and other basic provisions

3. Several constitutional provisions deal with issues of equality and non-discrimination; notably, Article 30 para 7 prohibits, inter alia, incitement to national, racial, class or religious hatred or discrimination. Article 4 para 2 lays down the equality of citizens without any distinction on account of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, opinion and political allegiance, wealth or social background, while Article 16 guarantees the equality of citizens before the law and the public authorities, without privilege or discrimination. Noting that these provisions refer explicitly to citizens, ECRI is pleased to learn that a new Law on the Status of Aliens, in force since April 2001, provides in its Article 2 paragraph 1 that "In Romania, aliens shall enjoy the right to general protection of persons and their effects, as safeguarded by the Constitution and other laws, as well as the rights provided for under international treaties". ECRI is nevertheless of the opinion that the constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination should be widened to explicitly cover non-citizens.

4. Other constitutional provisions refer to the rights of minority groups; thus Article 6 recognises the right of national minorities to preserve, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity. Article 32 allows for the right of minority groups to learn and be educated in their mother tongue, while freedom of religion is guaranteed in Article 29.

5. In its first report, ECRI expressed concern that the constitutional provisions regarding discrimination were not sufficiently applied in practice. ECRI therefore welcomes the adoption of a Governmental Order 137/2000 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination which is intended to complete these provisions (see "Civil and Administrative Law Provisions" below).

- ***Law on political parties***

6. Law No 27 of April 1996 on political parties prohibits parties which spread, inter alia, national, racial and religious hatred or incitement to discrimination. It appears however that this provision has never been used, despite the fact that the "Great Romania" party produces materials and makes statements which are clearly likely to stir up ill-feeling against certain minority groups in the population. ECRI urges the Romanian authorities to give consideration to this issue and to take steps, including the effective implementation of the legislation in force, to combat such forms of incitement to hatred on the part of political parties.

- ***Law on Religious Denominations***

7. Religions are distinguished under Romanian legislation as either religious cults or religious associations. Seventeen religious cults are recognised as such and enjoy certain benefits, including financial support from the state and tax relief. There have been some complaints concerning the possibility for religions currently recognised as religious associations to register as religious cults: ECRI considers that such issues should be examined closely and in a fully objective fashion by the authorities.

8. A new draft law on religions has been criticised on the grounds that it appears to place the Orthodox religion in a privileged position as a State religion. The draft has been withdrawn from parliamentary examination and is now being reworked: consultation has apparently been sought with the religious cults in Romania and with international organisations in this respect. ECRI encourages the Romanian authorities to ensure that the redrafted law on religion takes full account of the opinions expressed during such consultations.

C. Criminal law provisions

9. The Criminal Code prohibits in its Article 166 the dissemination of propaganda in favour of a totalitarian state, including a fascist regime, while Article 317 prohibits chauvinistic nationalist propaganda and incitement to racial or national hatred. Article 247 covers offences committed in the course of duties by civil servants who restrict employment or the exercise of the rights of an individual or who place an individual in a situation of inferiority for reasons of nationality, race, sex or religion. It appears however that until recently these criminal law provisions have been scarcely implemented in practice; for example, only one conviction under Article 317 has been recorded (concerning the publication of antisemitic material by a newspaper editor), although there are several reports of statements made in the media which would potentially fall under the scope of this provision. This trend seems to be changing, since several cases have been introduced, under Article 317, by the General Prosecutor's Office. There have been no convictions under Article 247, although incidents of discriminatory behaviour on the part of officials have been reported to ECRI, particularly at the local level and towards members of the Roma/Gypsy community. ECRI therefore urges the Romanian authorities to give a high priority to the issue of implementation as regards criminal law provisions to combat racism: this issue is dealt with further under "Issues of particular concern" below.

10. Moreover, ECRI notes that there are no provisions defining ordinary crimes with a racist motive as specifically racist crimes, or allowing for racist motivation to be taken into account by courts as an aggravating circumstance when sentencing. ECRI recommends that such provisions be introduced in order to complete the body of criminal legislation in this field.

D. Civil and administrative law provisions

11. The recent introduction of Governmental Order 137/2000 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination represents a significant step forward in the legislative field as regards combating racism and discrimination. In accordance with the Romanian legislative system, this governmental order has been in effect as from November 2000 pending its adoption by Parliament as a law: as of May 2001, the Order was being discussed in Parliament to this end. Governmental Order 137/2000 defines both direct and indirect discrimination, constrains both physical and moral persons to respect the principle of non-discrimination, allows for positive action or special measures "for persons and groups of persons belonging to national minorities and, for the communities of national minorities, with a view to protecting disadvantaged groups which do not enjoy equal opportunities". It covers fields such as employment, access to goods and services, education and access to public places. Both individuals and non-governmental organisations on behalf of individuals or groups can bring cases to the courts. The creation of a National Council to combat Discrimination is foreseen to oversee the implementation of this new legislation.

12. ECRI welcomes the introduction of this legislation, which demonstrates a willingness on the part of the authorities to acknowledge that problems of racism and discrimination exist in Romania and to take concrete steps to combat these phenomenon. ECRI hopes that the Order will be adopted by Parliament as swiftly as possible. Fears have been expressed in this respect that some elements of Parliament may be hostile to the new anti-discrimination legislation and may accordingly seek to modify its content or hinder its adoption: ECRI hopes that such fears will not prove grounded and that the legislation will be adopted by Parliament without any dilution of its content.

13. ECRI is however concerned that a lack of awareness of the new legislation in force means that it is not yet being used, despite the fact that the types of discrimination it covers, such as discrimination in employment and discrimination in access to public places, are often reported to occur, particularly as concerns members of the Roma/Gypsy community. For example, it has been reported that the first case brought under the anti-discrimination legislation was adjourned due to a lack of knowledge of this very piece of legislation on the part of the court in question. ECRI also notes that the National Council to Combat Discrimination, which, according to the Order was to be put in place no later than 60 days after the coming into force of the latter, is still not created; moreover, concerns have been expressed that its composition and functions are still not clearly defined (see "Specialised bodies and other institutions" below).

14. ECRI hopes that the Governmental Order 137/2000 will be accepted by Parliament without further modification as swiftly as possible and that steps will be taken to ensure its full implementation, including the creation of the National Council against Discrimination with a composition and mandate suitable to its task: in this respect, ECRI draws the attention of the Romanian authorities to its general policy recommendation No 2 on specialised bodies to combat racism and discrimination. ECRI also encourages the authorities to continue as a matter of priority their efforts aimed at promoting wide-ranging awareness-raising measures among the general public, employers and persons offering public services, and especially among those responsible for applying the legislation, such as the judiciary and the legal profession.

- ***Law on local public administration and local autonomy***

15. The new law on local public administration and local autonomy foresees measures concerning the rights of persons belonging to national minorities at the local level. Where a national minority composes more than 20% of the population of a given locality, the language of that minority may be used if requested in, inter alia, written and oral communications with the local authorities and in public signs and advertisements. ECRI welcomes these amendments to the previous law on local public administration, and hopes that their full implementation will be closely monitored. ECRI notes however that some minority groups may not fully benefit from such provisions since they rarely comprise 20% of the population of a given locality but are rather dispersed, and feels that the impact of the new provisions on the situation of the different minority groups in Romania should be the subject of further consideration.

- ***Electoral law***

16. Modifications to the electoral law prior to the local elections of June 2000 set a 5% threshold for the election of candidates. This provision had a negative impact on the representation of certain minority groups, notably Roma/Gypsy representatives, in elected posts at local level such as posts as town councillors. ECRI recommends that the Romanian authorities reconsider this threshold in the light of the effect which it has had on minority group representation in political life at the local level.

17. At the national level, each national minority has the automatic right to one seat in Parliament, even if its representatives do not meet the 5% threshold of votes. It has been commented that certain minority groups, such as the Roma/Gypsy community, are under-represented in Parliament in comparison to their numerical size.

- ***Regulations concerning restitution of confiscated or expropriated property***

18. In its first report, ECRI noted that some difficulties persisted as regards the restitution of property confiscated or expropriated from Churches and communities under the Communist regime. The authorities have taken steps to address this issue through either restitution of original property or compensation: the situation is complicated by the fact that many of the buildings confiscated are now in use as public institutions such as schools or have been acquired bona fide by private persons. There have been some complaints that the principles and modes of implementation of the compensation system do not represent an acceptable solution and that buildings and places of worship should be returned in more cases to the communities from which they were expropriated. While recognising the difficulties and complexities involved, ECRI encourages the authorities to continue in their efforts to resolve this issue to the satisfaction of the parties concerned.

E. Administration of Justice

19. ECRI is very concerned at reports that discrimination still occurs to a significant extent in the field of administration of justice, particularly as regards members of the Roma/Gypsy community. In particular, serious problems persist in the way the police deal with members of this community, an issue which is dealt with in more depth below under “Conduct of certain institutions”. As regards courts and sentencing, it is reported that members of the Roma/Gypsy community tend to receive disproportionately harsh sentences (see below, under “Conduct of certain

institutions"). ECRI urges the Romanian authorities to undertake a review of the functioning of the judicial system in order to ascertain the extent to which discrimination occurs in the administration of justice. Steps should be taken to combat such discrimination, including special training in the area of non-discrimination for future judges and on-the-job training for judges already appointed, as well as further measures to combat discriminatory practices on the part of the police

- ***Legal aid***

20. Especially in the context of the new body of anti-discrimination legislation, ECRI stresses the importance of ensuring that all members of society, including those who are the most disadvantaged in economic and social terms, have access to the justice system in order to redress any racism or discrimination experienced. ECRI therefore recommends that the system of free legal aid be widely-publicised to ensure that victims of discrimination enjoy access to legal recourse: initiatives in this field might be developed in conjunction with non-governmental organisations working in the field of combating racism and discrimination.

F. Special governmental initiatives to promote tolerance and equality

- ***Specialised bodies and other institutions***

National Council to Combat Discrimination

21. This body, which is foreseen in Government Order No 137/2000 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination, has not yet been put in place, and its exact role and composition are not yet clear, although it has been reported that it may be an interministerial body and thus part of the governmental structure. In this respect, ECRI draws attention to its general policy recommendation no 2 on specialised bodies to combat racism and discrimination, in which ECRI lists some of the main attributes and functions of such bodies. In this recommendation, ECRI stresses the importance of ensuring the independence of such bodies from government and the political arena, and notes that their functions may include overseeing and implementing legislation in the field of anti-discrimination, providing advice and assistance to victims of discrimination, bringing cases on their own initiative before the courts and providing information and advice to relevant bodies and institutions, including State bodies and institutions. ECRI feels that the new National Council to Combat Discrimination should ideally be developed along the lines set down in this recommendation, and urges the authorities to consider closely the issue of how best the Council might fulfil its aim in terms of its composition and mandate.

People's Advocate

22. This body, which functions as an Ombudsman, was set up in 1997 and has the task of dealing with complaints from persons who feel that their rights and civil liberties have not been respected by the authorities. The People's Advocate is nominated by the Senate for four years and is organised into five departments, one of which deals, inter alia, with issues relating to national minorities. The office of the People's Advocate has dealt with complaints in the area of interest to ECRI, most of which concern discrimination against members of the Roma/Gypsy community. For example complaints have been investigated concerning discrimination and ill-treatment of Roma/Gypsies on the part of the police, discriminatory job

advertisements which specify that Roma/Gypsies need not apply and which have appeared in National Employment Agencies, and refusal of entry to public places.

23. ECRI feels that the Office of the People's Advocate has an important role to play in providing an institution to which individuals may turn with complaints of discrimination, in monitoring the extent of discrimination in Romania and in providing input and expertise in the drafting of legislation. In this respect, ECRI is pleased to learn that a draft law before Parliament would make Parliamentary consultation with the People's Advocate compulsory as regards issues of human rights. ECRI notes that many individuals prefer to bring complaints in person to the office of the People's Advocate, and recommends therefore that the authorities provide this body with additional staffing and resources to enable it to open branches at the regional level, with a view to facilitating such contacts.

Department for Interethnic Relations

24. The Department for the Protection of National Minorities (DPNM) was set up in 1997 under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister and was responsible for drafting legislation and providing opinions on legislation, monitoring legislation in force, co-operation with non-governmental organisations and with international organisations and managing the technical and financial assistance provided for national minorities. Following the general election in November 2000, this department was included in a new ministry - the Ministry for Public Information, and renamed the Department for Interethnic Relations. It is now co-ordinated by a State Secretary with three deputies - one in charge of the National Office for Roma, one responsible for the Hungarian minority and one for the German minority. The Department was instrumental in preparing the Governmental Order 137/2000 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination and in preparing the Strategy for the Improvement of the Condition of the Roma (see "Vulnerable groups" below). ECRI encourages the Romanian government to continue to give a high priority to the activities of the Department and to ensure that it receives sufficient funding and resources to carry out its task successfully, at the national and also at the regional level. In particular, ECRI feels that the financial and human resources allocated to the National Office for Roma should be increased to meet the workload involved in implementation of the range of measures proposed to improve the situation of the Roma/Gypsy community in Romania.

Council for National Minorities

25. The Council for National Minorities (CNM) was set up in 1993 as a consultative body to the government and became the main civil society partner of the former Department for the Protection of National Minorities. It is composed of representatives of all minorities with seats allocated in Parliament and represents a forum whereby national minorities can bring issues concerning them to the attention of the authorities. After the restructuring of the DPMN, the CNM has continued its consultative role although its members have expressed concerns to ECRI that its statute has not yet been put on a legal footing under the new organisation[1] and that the new organisational structure may mean that national minorities have a less direct link to the centre of government. Fears have also been expressed that less weight may now be given to the opinion of the CNM in matters such as budgetary allocations to the various minority groups. ECRI hopes that the apprehensions voiced by members of the CNM will be appeased as swiftly as possible and that this body will

[1] *A Government decision n° 589/2001 on the statute of the Council for National Minorities has recently been adopted.*

play a central role as an advisory and consultative civil society body representing the concerns and needs of the various national minorities in Romania.

- ***Governmental Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma***

26. The newly-adopted Governmental Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma establishes four bodies: the Joint Committee of Implementation and Monitoring, the Ministerial Commissions on the Roma, County Offices on Roma and Local Experts on Roma Affairs, which will ensure, inter alia, a direct link between Roma/Gypsy communities and central government. Within the structure of the Presidency, a new office has also been established: the Presidential Counsellor for Minorities (who is at present a person of Roma origin).

G. Education and Training/Awareness-raising

- ***School education***

27. Human rights education has now been introduced into schools under the curriculum subject "civic education"; however, it has been commented that in general, the teaching of human rights related issues is rather didactic and theoretical and may not succeed in engaging the interest and emotions of pupils. It has also been commented that the history, culture and identity of the different minority groups which are an integral part of Romanian society are not sufficiently reflected in the various curriculum subjects, particularly as regards the teaching of Romanian history. ECRI recommends that more interactive and participative methods of teaching children about issues of racism and intolerance should be elaborated and that teaching materials should be introduced which reflect more closely the diverse nature of Romanian society and the contribution made by the different minority groups throughout the country's history and in the present day.

- ***Awareness-raising***

28. See under "Climate of opinion" in "Issues of particular concern" below.

H. Reception and status of non-citizens

- ***Refugees and asylum seekers***

29. Government Order 102/2000, prepared in collaboration with the UNHCR, regulates the reception and status of refugees in Romania. The National Office for Refugees was set up at the end of 2000 in order to process and decide upon applications for refugee status and to deal with all aspects of the reception of asylum seekers and refugees such as accommodation, provision of food and health care, and integration issues. Numbers of asylum applications are rising and steps are being taken to deal with this increase, such as the establishment of asylum centres for the accommodation of those persons who have no means of supporting themselves. Decisions on asylum applications are taken by the Office for Refugees; appeals can be made through the court system in two instances. Non-governmental organisations provide legal and other advice and work at border points and in asylum centres.

30. Although it is still rather early to evaluate the functioning of the recently-established legal and administrative framework for dealing with refugees and asylum seekers, ECRI hopes that possible areas of concern raised by various parties prior to these

developments will be satisfactorily resolved: these concerns relate, inter alia, to the situation of asylum seekers held for long periods in administrative detention and to possible shortfalls in the decision-making process concerning the granting of refugee status. ECRI particularly stresses the need to ensure that officials dealing with asylum requests at border points and within the country receive on-going training in human rights and in dealing with persons from various backgrounds and cultures in a non-discriminatory fashion.

31. As regards integration measures, the Romanian Committee for Migration Problems has drawn up a National Refugee Integration Programme which will be implemented in collaboration with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and with non-governmental organisations. The programme addresses areas such as economic independence, health care, education and community life, and foresees special measures for vulnerable categories such as single women, one-parent families and unaccompanied minors. ECRI encourages the implementation and development of such strategies, noting that numbers of refugees settling in Romania will probably continue to rise in the coming years and that issues of integration are therefore likely to become increasingly important.

I. Access to public services

- *Access to education*

32. Efforts have been made in recent years to improve the education system for national minorities. New classes for various minority groups, including Turks, Ukrainians and Germans, were set up in different regions in 2000, while at the university level, a Turkish-language section and three Hungarian-language sections have been introduced. Amendments to the Law on Education adopted in 1999 answered some of the requests made by the Hungarian minority. A Hungarian private university will start courses in October 2001, in Miercurea Ciuc; it will be financed with the support of the Hungarian State. Although the long-standing request for a public Hungarian-language university, mentioned in ECRI's first report, has not been fulfilled, the new law foresees "the possibility to establish multicultural universities, in conformity with special laws". Steps have been taken towards the creation of a multicultural university in the city of Cluj (Babes Bolyai University) which has Romanian, Hungarian and German language departments.

33. Despite these improvements, it is reported that education for national minorities is still uneven, with some minority groups enjoying well-organised provision of mother-tongue education while others have difficulties in accessing education in their mother tongue, particularly in regions where minority groups are dispersed. It has been reported that the law on education is not always applied at the local level as regards budgetary allocations for minority language education and the provision of school books. Notwithstanding the restricted budgetary allocations for education in general, ECRI feels that the area of education for national minorities must remain a priority and that steps should be taken to ensure that all minority groups benefit from the provisions in the Law on Education concerning education in their mother tongue. In particular, attention should be paid to ensuring that sufficient teachers of the various minority languages are trained and recruited, and that appropriate schoolbooks and manuals are produced and distributed. Moreover, in the light of complaints from minority groups that mother tongue teaching was presented as an optional subject outside the main curriculum and school hours, ECRI is pleased to learn that the intention is to re-incorporate such teaching into the main curriculum. Minority groups have also expressed the desire for school inspectors responsible for each minority

group to be appointed to cover the various regions: at present there are half-time posts to cover each minority. ECRI is pleased to learn that plans to reduce the numbers of school inspectors responsible for minority groups, particularly as regards the Roma/Gypsy community, will now not be implemented, and encourages the authorities to continue to give consideration to the issue of how minority education may best be supervised and safeguarded, in close co-operation with the communities in question.

34. The Roma/Gypsy minority, as in most other countries, is particularly disadvantaged as regards education, with high levels of absenteeism and dropping out of the school system. ECRI is pleased to learn that the numbers of children studying the Romany language have increased and that more Roma/Gypsy teachers are being recruited, stressing the importance of such teachers as a role model for children. ECRI regrets however that school directors now apparently have discretionary power to decide whether or not Romany classes will be offered in their school, whereas such classes were in the past obligatory on the request of a group of parents. ECRI is moreover particularly concerned to learn that discriminatory behaviours on the part of some teachers persist, including the practice of placing Roma children at the back of the classroom and of treating them differently from the other children in the classroom. It has also been reported that some teachers are unwilling to teach Roma children as their own performance is evaluated according to the educational achievements of their pupils, fearing that the average level of this achievement will be put at risk by the often poor results of Roma/Gypsy children. ECRI feels that even if such discrimination is not a reflection of institutional discrimination, it is most important to take steps to prevent their occurrence. Such steps might include preventative measures such as specialised training for teachers working with Roma/Gypsy children, but also the application of sanctions and other measures to put an end to such practices where they occur.

35. Further measures are foreseen to improve the situation of the Roma/Gypsy community as regards education, including modifications to the law on education which would allow for a more flexible system of education for children and young adults who may have missed out on education: for example, facilities for part-time school attendance, education at home and distance education are foreseen. A system of reserved places for Roma/Gypsy students at the tertiary level also exists, and there are plans to introduce reserved places for Roma/Gypsy trainees at the police academy. ECRI hopes that such measures will be implemented without delay and their effectiveness in raising levels of educational achievement among disadvantaged Roma/Gypsy children closely monitored and evaluated.

J. Employment

36. In the field of employment, the Roma/Gypsy community is, once again, the minority group which faces particular disadvantage. Although unemployment statistics do not identify the different ethnic groups, it is recognised that members of the Roma/Gypsy community face especially high levels of unemployment and when employed, tend to be confined to low-level positions. Although this is often represented as a social problem linked to the disadvantaged situation of the Roma/Gypsy community in other fields of life, especially education and vocational training, ECRI underlines the role played by discrimination and racism in accounting for the situation of the Roma/Gypsy community in the field of employment. ECRI is most concerned to learn that despite the existence of legislation forbidding discrimination in general, including in employment, and legislation forbidding discrimination in advertising (Law on Advertising), job advertisements specifying that Roma/Gypsies need not apply are

still published in newspapers. ECRI expresses its particular disapproval of the fact that such advertisements have even been displayed in national employment agencies, and that reportedly Roma/Gypsies who apply to national employment agencies to find work have been referred on to Roma/Gypsy organisations rather than assisted in their search for work by the employment agency. Insufficient action appears to have been taken to combat such forms of discrimination.

37. In this context, ECRI is pleased to learn that measures are being introduced to try to improve the situation of the Roma/Gypsy community on the labour market, including professional training courses, preferential loans for setting up small businesses and partnerships with employers to encourage the employment of Roma/Gypsies in posts paid for initially by the national employment agency. ECRI hopes that such measures will be rapidly implemented and developed, with a system of evaluation built in. Nevertheless, ECRI also stresses the importance of taking steps to eliminate concrete manifestations of discrimination on the labour market, including awareness-raising measures among employers and officials in employment agencies as regards the legislation in force prohibiting discrimination of the type mentioned above, and a real commitment to punishing such forms of discrimination when they are uncovered. As regards the Law on Advertising, ECRI is disappointed to learn that although contact persons have been foreseen at the local level to whom complaints can be addressed concerning discriminatory advertising, such posts have not yet been filled: ECRI feels that this system should be put in place without delay and accompanied by information campaigns to ensure that the prohibition of such forms of discrimination and the means of redress are well-known among the general public.

38. As regards the employment situation of other minority groups in Romania, it has been commented that although they do not generally face discrimination to the extent of that suffered by the Roma/Gypsy community, they are underrepresented as regards some of the higher positions in certain areas of public employment, such as the judiciary, the police force and the army. It has also been reported that for nominated positions such as the position of school director, members of minority groups are under-represented, even in regions where the minority group in question forms the larger part of the population. ECRI feels that this situation calls for further examination to uncover possible discriminatory practices, and that measures, including positive measures, should be taken to ensure that members of minority groups are represented throughout all levels of the institutions of society.

K. Vulnerable groups

This section covers certain minority groups which may be particularly vulnerable to problems of racism, discrimination and intolerance in the country in question. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive overview of the situation of all minority groups in the country, nor to imply that groups not mentioned face no problems of racism and discrimination.

- Roma/Gypsy community

39. The Roma/Gypsy community in Romania is particularly vulnerable to discrimination and disadvantage in many fields of life, as outlined elsewhere in this report. It is also the object of continued prejudice and racism on the part of the majority community, despite the fact that the violent clashes which took place in the 1990s seem to have died down. Stereotypes concerning the Roma/Gypsy community persist and are reflected in societal attitudes, the presentation of issues concerning this community by the media, and in the positions adopted by some politicians and political parties

(see "Climate of opinion" under "Issues of particular concern" below). There is a tendency to blame the Roma/Gypsy community for its own problems and for the problems of society as a whole, and to perceive this community as a risk for and even a threat to society against which repressive measures should be taken. Such attitudes are manifested in overt discrimination in many fields of life, notably education, employment and access to public places such as bars and restaurants.

40. ECRI is pleased to learn that a governmental National Strategy for the Improvement of the Condition of the Roma has recently been drawn up, in close collaboration with Roma/Gypsy organisations. This Strategy foresees measures across all fields of life, and aims, inter alia, to remove prejudices, stereotypes and discriminatory practices of civil servants towards the Roma/Gypsy community, to change public opinion concerning Roma, to prevent institutional and social discrimination of Roma and to ensure that Roma have equal opportunities to attain a decent standard of living. The Strategy is a ten year programme commencing in 2001, with a four-year medium term plan of action. ECRI strongly encourages the Romanian authorities to build upon the momentum and good will generated by the adoption of this Strategy, which has been well-accepted by civil society, and to ensure that the necessary resources and political support are made available in order to give concrete implementation to the range of measures foreseen. ECRI stresses the importance of continuing to involve partners from civil society in the implementation of the Strategy and to build in mechanisms for its evaluation and reorientation where necessary.

41. A particularly vulnerable group within the Roma/Gypsy community is comprised of those persons who do not possess any identity cards or other documentation such as birth certificates. These persons are unable to access benefits in the field of housing and social and health provision, and are excluded from other fields such as employment since all these areas are dependent upon the possession of an identity card. They are also particularly vulnerable in their relations with the police and with local authorities. In this respect, ECRI deplores the recent declaration by the mayor of Bucharest that all persons without proper residence permits are to be expelled from the city.

42. A pilot project has been initiated in conjunction with the non-governmental sector in order to identify persons without identity documents and to regulate their situation; however, it is estimated that many more persons are still without official documentation and that this situation may also persist into the future as regards the children of such persons. ECRI is concerned to learn that there are cases in which the police take such persons into custody on the grounds of their lack of identity documents but that no steps are subsequently taken to regularise their situation; it is also reported that some public officials do not facilitate the applications for documentation of such persons, who are often illiterate. ECRI is of the opinion that the measures undertaken, in conjunction with representatives of civil society, should be widened and accelerated in order to regularise the situation of those persons without any proper documentation: such steps should include awareness-raising campaigns about the advantages of obtaining identity documents and about the procedures for doing so, special training for the persons responsible for assisting such persons in obtaining the correct documentation, and measures to ensure that the administrative procedures involved are accessible and facilitated.

L. Monitoring the situation in the country

- *Data and statistics*

43. The census of 1992 was carried out in accordance with international methodology and included the voluntary self-identification of individuals as members of minority groups. The information gained in the census has also been compared with other demographic data to obtain some picture of the situation of minority groups as regards various areas of life such as economic situation and educational level. One important gap noted in the census information gathered is the under-estimation of the size of the Roma/Gypsy community in Romania: it is generally considered that many Roma/Gypsies were unwilling to identify themselves as such for various reasons, such as apprehensions concerning the use which might be made of the information or a lack of ethnic consciousness. In fact, it is estimated that the Roma/Gypsy community is much larger than the figure of 400 000 identified in the census, and that more than 1 million Roma/Gypsies are probably living in Romania. It is hoped that the next census, which will probably be carried out in 2002, will obtain a more accurate figure, since the changing situation in Romania and the building up of a Roma consciousness may encourage more Roma/Gypsies to identify themselves as such, particularly since the results of the census as regards national minority groups provide a basis for the political representation of those groups.

- *Police data*

44. ECRI is most concerned to learn of the practice on the part of the police of passing on to the press information about the ethnic origin of suspected perpetrators of crime. Such data have been widely misused, for example in newspaper reports which focus on the ethnic origin of alleged perpetrators, and have contributed to maintaining prejudices and stereotypes within society against the Roma/Gypsy community. It has also been reported that the police at local level tend to record the ethnic origin of alleged perpetrators based on their own suppositions. Although the police authorities have issued instructions banning the transmission of ethnic data of this kind to the press, the practice has not been completely halted. ECRI is of the opinion that steps should be taken to address cases where such data has been obtained by the press, and that the police officers involved should be sanctioned, with a view to putting a final end to such practices.

M. Conduct of certain institutions

- *Police*

45. In its first report, ECRI drew attention to the problem of police misbehaviour and mistreatment of members of minority groups, particularly members of the Roma/Gypsy community, and called for the intensification of training initiatives for police officers to combat such practices. ECRI is pleased to learn therefore that the police authorities have initiated programmes aimed at changing mentalities and behaviours of police officers towards the vulnerable groups, especially the Roma/Gypsy minority, including the organisation of seminars at central and local level in conjunction with representatives of the target groups, in order to improve communication and understanding. There are also plans to reserve places at the police academy for Roma recruits as part of the national strategy for the Roma. These initiatives have apparently started to open up opportunities for dialogue and to improve the situation.

46. Nevertheless, grave problems meanwhile persist throughout the country as regards police attitudes and behaviour towards members of the Roma/Gypsy community. ECRI deplores in particular that cases of police violence against members of the Roma/Gypsy community, including the use of firearms, continue to occur, and have led to serious and sometimes lethal injuries. Police raids on areas where Roma/Gypsy communities are living, often at night and with no authorisation, are also relatively common: persons thus apprehended, including women and children, are then taken to the police station for questioning. Such raids, which are often violent, are reported in the press and on the television as an example of police action against criminality: no measures are taken by the media to conceal the identity of the persons affected by such raids. On the contrary, the fact that Roma are involved is often stressed and exploited to feed the general prejudices and stereotypes mentioned elsewhere in this report. It has been reported to ECRI that some police controls carried out in trains, ostensibly in order to identify persons travelling without tickets or persons begging, target mainly Roma/Gypsies.

47. Such abuses, although well-documented and reported to the authorities by non-governmental organisations and individuals, do not appear to be thoroughly investigated or sanctioned: cases which are investigated are usually dismissed. In this respect, ECRI draws attention to its general policy recommendation No 1 in which it advocates the setting up of an independent investigatory mechanism to look into reports of police abuses and with power to take action where necessary. ECRI also stresses that the police authorities must take immediate action to prevent organised actions on the part of the police such as raids or indiscriminate arrests in which innocent people are treated as criminals.

- ***Judiciary***

48. Although no reliable data appear to exist in this area, it has been reported that members of the Roma/Gypsy community are also discriminated against before the courts, where they are likely to receive harsher sentences than others accused of similar crimes. ECRI feels that this issue should be the subject of research and investigation, and that steps should be taken to ensure that judges receive special training in non-discrimination in order to overcome such prejudices. ECRI feels that the introduction of the new anti-discrimination legislation provides an opportune moment for such training, both to raise awareness of the legislation in itself, and to raise issues of discrimination and prejudice as they may affect the day-to-day decisions made by the courts.

N. Media

49. The media, particularly the written media, have in the past been responsible for spreading prejudices and stereotypes among society and for sensationalising any incidents of ethnic conflict in the country. Although the situation has somewhat improved, it is still the case that newspapers publish reports specifying the ethnic identity of alleged perpetrators, refer to the Roma/Gypsy minority in derogatory terms, or carry discriminatory advertisements. Police raids on Roma/Gypsy communities are also reported on the television and in the written press, with no efforts being made to conceal the identity of those involved. Moreover, certain sections of the press still publish articles with antisemitic overtones, or stirring up ill-feeling against, in particular, the Hungarian minority. Although legislation exists to combat the phenomenon of hate speech and to regulate the media in that field, such legislation has rarely if ever been applied. ECRI stresses the importance of ensuring that the legislation in force to combat media excesses is consistently and rigorously

implemented. Furthermore, ECRI encourages the media professions to make full use of self-regulatory mechanisms, such as codes of conduct, and to promote and support reporting which presents issues relating to minority groups in a balanced and non-prejudiced fashion.

SECTION II: ISSUES OF PARTICULAR CONCERN

In this section of its country-by-country reports, ECRI wishes to draw attention to a limited number of issues which in its opinion merit particular and urgent attention in the country in question. In the case of Romania, ECRI would like to draw attention to the need for implementation of legislation and policies to combat racism and discrimination, and to the issue of the climate of opinion in Romania.

O. Implementation of legislation and policies to combat racism and discrimination

50. As outlined in other parts of this report, Romania has taken a number of steps in recent months to address issues of racism and discrimination. In particular, new legislation has been adopted to combat discrimination and a National Strategy for the Improvement of the Condition of the Roma has been elaborated. ECRI welcomes such initiatives as an acknowledgement on the part of the authorities that problems of racism and discrimination do exist in Romania and that action must be taken to combat such problems. ECRI is also very pleased to learn that the authorities have made efforts to involve interested parties throughout civil society in the development of such initiatives, and that more channels for dialogue and co-operation have accordingly been opened up.

51. However, ECRI is concerned that although the legislative and policy framework to combat racism and intolerance has now improved, much remains to be done as regards implementation. As described elsewhere in this report, the legislative provisions already in place to combat manifestations of xenophobia such as incitement to hatred, racist political discourse, discrimination on the part of civil servants or discrimination in other fields of life have as yet rarely been used. Although this is perhaps more understandable in the case of Governmental Order 137/2000 to prevent discrimination, given its recent adoption, it is worrying that more long-standing legislative provisions have not been implemented despite clear evidence of cases where they should have been applied.

52. This lack of implementation also applies to areas such as police misbehaviour: thus, although measures have been taken to train police in human rights and to improve their relations with minority groups, problems persist and it has been frequently reported to ECRI that police abuses of power as described elsewhere in this report are not sufficiently investigated, curbed or punished. Similarly, policies adopted at the central level are not always applied at the local level; this is the case for example as regards educational provision for national minorities, which is not consistently and equally available for all minority groups throughout the country.

53. ECRI feels that it is important to build upon the momentum and good will created and to push ahead with the implementation of legislation and policies in the field of combating racism and intolerance. In this respect, ECRI stresses the need to ensure that knowledge and expertise of the range of legislation and policy measures in force are disseminated down to those persons responsible for implementation, particularly at the regional and local level. ECRI therefore encourages initiatives such as the establishment of regional branches of the Department for Interethnic Relations, and

would also encourage the appointment throughout the different sections of the administration of persons, especially members of minority groups, with particular expertise and knowledge in the field of combating discrimination and minority issues. ECRI is therefore pleased to learn that the Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma foresees the employment of Roma representatives in each Prefecture with responsibility for implementing the measures foreseen. ECRI also underlines the importance of translating more general statements and long-term objectives into concrete and immediate measures which will have an effect in the short-term. Mechanisms should also be developed to evaluate and monitor the success or otherwise of measures taken, to ensure that strategies elaborated have a real and significant outcome.

P. Climate of opinion

54. Although violent clashes, such as those which took place in the 1990s between majority and minority groups, notably involving the Roma/Gypsy community, have died down, improving the climate of opinion in society towards minority groups remains an area in which further action needs to be taken. ECRI considers that some discriminating, xenophobic and racial prejudices and stereotypes persist in Romanian society and that measures to improve the general climate of opinion as regards minority groups should constitute an urgent priority.

55. In this respect, ECRI would like to draw attention to the links between a negative climate of opinion among the general public on the one hand and political discourse and media representations on the other. Within the political arena, nationalistic political discourse uses chauvinistic and xenophobic rhetoric with impunity, accompanied by the publication of material intended to stir up ill-feeling among the majority population towards minority groups. The Parliamentary elections of November 2000 were the occasion of antisemitic and anti-minority group rhetoric in the campaign period and saw a worrying rise in votes for the extremist "Great Romania" party resulting in an increase in the Parliamentary representation of that party. Although politicians in other parties have spoken in favour of measures to promote anti-discrimination and to combat racism, some of them have not always been consistent in their positions or in speaking out against political manifestations of xenophobia and incitement to hatred against minority groups.

56. At the level of local politics too there are also elements which tend to foster a negative climate of opinion towards minority groups. For example, certain mayors have adopted an overtly nationalistic approach, criticising measures taken to benefit minority groups in society, while others have attempted to introduce measures discriminating against minority groups, such as attempts to move Roma/Gypsy communities to the outskirts of towns or to "cleanse" their cities of undesirable groups without permanent residence. In the media, as outlined above, some reports tend to foster a climate of suspicion and dislike among the majority population as regards certain minority groups, notably the Roma/Gypsy community. All such manifestations of intolerance within the public arena are likely to influence the general climate of opinion within the country, and to find continued support among certain segments of the population which may seek scapegoats to blame for their own economic and social hardships.

57. In its first report on Romania, ECRI gave its support to Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1123 (1997) which recommended the organisation of an awareness-raising campaign against racism and intolerance. ECRI is therefore pleased to learn that special budgetary allocation has been made in this area since 1997 and that a

number of initiatives have been taken to raise awareness of these issues among the general public and among children. However, as implemented these initiatives are sometimes rather theoretical and may not lead to a genuine changing of mentalities and attitudes. ECRI therefore encourages the continuation and further development of awareness-raising in the field of combating racism and discrimination, particularly in the context of the introduction of new legislation and policy measures as outlined in this report. Such measures should be particularly targeted at key groups of the population, including children and young people but also professionals such as police officers, the judiciary and civil servants, whose attitudes may impact on the daily experiences of minority groups. Awareness-raising initiatives should focus on the existence of intolerance, racism and discrimination and on their effects, as well as highlighting the history and culture of minority groups as an integral part of Romanian society. The association of the non-governmental sector in the development and organisation of such initiatives is likely to improve their dissemination, credibility and impact.

58. ECRI also underlines the crucial role that opinion leaders have to play in influencing the general climate of opinion in their country. ECRI stresses in particular that politicians have a responsibility not just to avoid using racist or intolerant rhetoric on their own part, but also to speak out consistently and publicly against such rhetoric when it occurs and to acknowledge the existence of intolerance and discrimination as problems which need to be addressed. The media also has a role to play, inter alia in avoiding the dissemination of negative stereotypes and the sensationalisation of incidents involving members of minority groups. ECRI hopes that the new initiatives taken up by the authorities to combat racism and intolerance will provide a starting point for a wide and in-depth debate in the political arena, in the media and in society in general, on how these issues are relevant to Romania, and thus promote a far-reaching improvement in the public perception and consciousness of certain minority groups.

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