European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: Recommendations for Media in Second Report on Ireland

IRIS 2002-5:1/4

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On 23 April, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) made public its Second Report on Ireland (even though it was adopted on 22 June of last year). The Report contains, inter alia, provisions concerning the media. These provisions are largely confined to Section M, entitled "Media", which reads: "Although some media report widely and in a responsible fashion on issues of racism and intolerance, and concerning minority groups, others have tended to adopt a very negative attitude, particularly towards asylum seekers and refugees and towards members of the Traveller Community. A particular problem which has been noted is the use of radio phone-in programmes by members of the public as a platform for airing prejudices and racist views, which apparently are not sufficiently countered by the programme presenters. Noting that such reporting fuels public prejudices and misconceptions, ECRI urges the media professions to apply codes of self-regulation" (para. 63).

The Report proceeds to identify the tendency of some segments of the media to portray asylum-seekers and refugees in a negative light as an issue of particular concern (para. 79). The use of inappropriate, disparaging terms in political discourse concerning such groups and their interests is also mentioned in the same vein.

It is noted in the Report that the Irish Government has announced its intention to review the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, 1989; the main piece of legislation in Ireland dealing with so-called "hate speech". The purpose of this review - which is being conducted under the auspices of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and is still ongoing - is understood to be to render the Act more effective, in light of the dearth of prosecutions in which it has resulted since its enactment.

ECRI is a body of the Council of Europe that is committed to the advancement of the struggle against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance in Europe. A primary focus of its work is the compilation and, ultimately, the publication of individual country reports. Its country-by-country approach involves a number of procedural stages: the drafting of a report; confidential dialogue with the national authorities of the country in question; a

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contact visit by ECRI Rapporteurs to the relevant country (in the case of a second country report) and the drafting of the final report. The first country report on Ireland was published in September 1997 (after having been adopted in June 1996).

ECRI also released country reports on Estonia, Georgia, Italy and Romania on 23 April 2002.

Second Report on Ireland (Adopted on 22 June 2001), Doc. No. CRI (2002) 3 of 23 April 2002, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Ecri/1-ECRI/2-Country-by-country_approach/Ireland/CBC2-Ireland.asp#TopOfPage

The Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, 1989

http://193.120.124.98/ZZA19Y1989.html

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