European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: Media Provisions in New Country Reports on Racism

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On 24 June 2005, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) adopted four new reports as part of its ongoing monitoring process of the laws, policies and practices to combat racism in the Member States of the Council of Europe (for commentary on earlier reports, see IRIS 2005-7: 3). The country reports, which examine the situation in Estonia, Lithuania, Romania and Spain, were adopted in the context of ECRI's third monitoring cycle. Each report contains specific recommendations concerning the media.

In three of the reports, ECRI expresses its concern that instances of incitement to hatred via the media be properly and vigorously prosecuted (note that variations of language occur; see: Reports on Estonia (para. 115), Lithuania (para. 62) and Romania (para. 113)). It calls on the Lithuanian authorities to "pay particular attention to the material posted on websites and Internet fora" (para. 64), whereas elsewhere, it specifically mentions "discriminatory articles" (Romania (para. 113)) or "discriminatory or incendiary articles" (Estonia (para. 115)).

Support by national authorities for media/journalistic training courses on combating racism and discrimination is also a recurrent recommendation in the country reports (Estonia (para. 115) and Romania (para. 112)).

ECRI makes essentially the same two-pronged recommendation in respect of Lithuania and Spain. First, it recommends that the national authorities should "impress on the media, without encroaching on their editorial independence, the need to ensure that reporting does not contribute to creating an atmosphere of hostility and rejection towards members of any minority groups". Such groups are taken to specifically include: "the Jewish, Roma and Chechen communities" (Lithuania (para. 63)) and "the Roma, Muslims and immigrants" (Spain (para. 86)). Second, ECRI recommends that the State authorities "engage in a debate with the media and members of other relevant civil society groups on how this could best be achieved" (Lithuania (para. 63) and Spain (para. 86)). The recommendation is more specific in respect of Spain, however, as it seeks solutions "both at national and at regional and local level" (para. 86). This two-pronged recommendation is becoming increasingly commonplace in ECRI monitoring work and is easily adapted to the specificities of the country in question.

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ECRI Report on Estonia, adopted on 24 June 2005

http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/Ecri/

ECRI Second report on Lithuania, adopted on 24 June 2005

http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/Ecri/

ECRI Third report on Romania, adopted on 24 June 2005

http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/Ecri/

ECRI Third report on Spain, adopted on 24 June 2005

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