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

IRIS 2005-7:1/2

Tarlach McGonagle
Institute for Information Law (IViR), University of Amsterdam

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recently made public five new reports as part of the third cycle of its monitoring process of the laws, policies and practices to combat racism in the Member States of the Council of Europe. Four of the country reports (Albania, Croatia, Poland and the United Kingdom) contain specific recommendations concerning the media.

Following a precedent in some of its previous country reports (see IRIS 2003-5: 3), ECRI pronounces itself in favour of the adoption in Albania of self-regulatory codes "to combat reporting that fuels racism, discrimination and intolerance". It calls on the Albanian authorities to exhort the media to promote balanced, impartial coverage that would promote "an atmosphere of appreciation of diversity" (para. 70). The report stresses the need for the media to give "adequate coverage to the daily lives, problems and concerns of members of minority communities" (para. 71). It also recommends that "members of minority groups be given adequate opportunities for access to the electronic and print media" (para. 72).

In its reports on Croatia and Poland, ECRI recommends that the State authorities set about raising awareness in the media sector of the dangers of racism and intolerance (paras. 82 and 79, respectively). It "strongly encourages" the State authorities in both countries to "make every effort to prosecute and punish" those responsible for the publication of racist articles.

ECRI encourages the UK authorities to: "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 asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants or members of any minority group, including Roma/Gypsies, Travellers and Muslims, and the need to play a proactive role in countering such an atmosphere." It is suggested that the advancement of this aim should involve dialogue between the State authorities, the media and civil society. The report also advocates the replication at national level of successful local initiatives in this area.

The country report on Sweden - the fifth in the latest batch of reports to be released by ECRI - does not contain any recommendations relating specifically to the media. However, one recommendation does deal with freedom of expression in more general terms, viz., that the Swedish authorities should ensure that the

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

dissemination of hate speech is “effectively countered”. In this connection, it draws attention to ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination.

All five of the ECRI country reports mentioned in the article are available at:

http://www.coe.int/T/E/human%5Frights/Ecri/

“Council of Europe: Reports on racism in Albania, Croatia, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom”, Press Release of 14 June 2005

http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/Ecri/1-ECRI/5-Current_events/01-eng_14_06_2005.asp#TopOfPage

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026