[MT] ECRI’s Report

IRIS 2008-8:1/27

Kevin Aguilina
Faculty of Laws, University of Malta

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe (ECRI) adopted its third report on Malta on 14 December 2007. This Report was released in Malta on 26 April 2008 by means of Government of Malta Department of Information Press Release No 577e. Although the Report discusses various issues regarding racism and intolerance, of particular relevance to IRIS readers is that part dealing with broadcast media, which reads as follows:

“86. As regards the broadcast media, ECRI welcomes the adoption by the Maltese authorities in April 2007 of requirements as to standards and practice that must be observed by broadcasters in order to respect and promote racial equality, the implementation of which is monitored by the Broadcasting Authority. ECRI notes that a fine has been imposed on a television channel for failure to comply with these requirements in July 2007 in connection with the broadcasting of views expressed by exponents of an extreme right-wing group. Prior to the entry into force of these requirements, the Broadcasting Authority had leveled another fine on the same channel in 2004 in connection with the broadcasting of speech by the leader of another extreme right-wing group, on the basis of Article 13 (2) (a) of the Broadcasting Act, combined with Article 82 A of the Criminal Code. ECRI understands however, that an appeal has been filed against this decision and is currently pending.

87. ECRI welcomes the fact that according to these requirements, media owners must raise awareness about the expected standards and practice including among editors and journalists and that the requirements should be a standard element of journalists’ training. ECRI also notes that the Broadcasting Authority has planned to train broadcasters on gender equality in co-operation with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality and believes that there is a real opportunity to extend such training to issues of race equality now that the mandate of the Commission has been extended accordingly.”

The report refers to the adoption by the Broadcasting Authority of mandatory Requirements as to Standards and Practice on the Promotion of Racial Equality (see IRIS 2007-4: 18) and to a charge issued by the Chief Executive of the Broadcasting Authority in July 2007 against a private television station licensed by the said Authority. This station admitted to the charge without any contestation and paid the applicable administrative fine. In that instance irregular immigrants were, during the course of the programme, called criminals and racist terminology

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was used. Contrary to the 2004 case, no appeal to the court has been lodged from the July 2007 admission of guilt. In the meantime training of broadcasters both in the promotion of racial equality and gender portrayal was due to commence on 5 June 2008, with the first batch of training being provided to all employees of the Monitoring Department of the Broadcasting Authority and to all employees of broadcasting stations working in the Sales and Marketing Departments. Training of other categories of broadcasters (mainly to journalists and producers) will follow suit.

"Malta Rebuts Allegations Made in ECRI Monitoring Report", Department of Information – Malta, press release No 0577e, 23 April 2008

http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press_releases/2008/04/pr0577e.asp

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