European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: Media Provisions in New Recommendation against Racism in Sport

IRIS 2009-5:1/3

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

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) launched its General Policy Recommendation (GPR) No. 12 on Combating Racism and Racial Discrimination in the Field of Sport in March 2009. It includes several media-specific recommendations.

GPR No. 12 makes three macro recommendations to the governments of Member States: to ensure equal opportunities in access to sport for all; to combat racism and racial discrimination in sport, and to build a coalition against racism in sport. Each macro recommendation comprises a number of specific recommendations. Some of the specific recommendations to combat racism and racial discrimination in sport are directed at various parties, including legislative and other authorities, police, sports organisations, athletes, coaches, referees, supporters' organisations, politicians, the media and sponsors and advertisers.

In this context, Member States are called on to "encourage the media":

a) to abstain from reproducing racist stereotypes in their reporting;

b) to pay the necessary attention to the image that they convey of minority groups in sports;

c) to report on racist incidents taking place during sport events and to give publicity to sanctions incurred by racist offenders

GPR No. 12 also contains provisions involving other freedom of expression issues. For instance, the police are requested to "identify and remove racist, antisemitic or discriminatory leaflets, symbols and banners". Similarly, sports federations and clubs are invited to "refuse access to sport grounds to persons who distribute or carry with them racist, antisemitic or discriminatory leaflets, symbols or banners". Supporters' organisations are encouraged to "be vigilant about possible racist and on their websites and fanzines". For their part, sponsors and advertisers are encouraged, inter alia, to "avoid giving a stereotyped picture of athletes from minority backgrounds".

ECRI regularly drafts GPRs as part of its work on general themes - one of its three main lines of activity. Country-by-country monitoring and developing relations

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

with civil society are its other two main lines of activity. The thematic focuses of earlier GPRs include “Combating racism while fighting terrorism” (No. 8, 2004) and “The fight against antisemitism” (No. 9, 2004) (see IRIS 2004-10: 4) and “Combating the dissemination of racist, xenophobic and antisemitic material via the Internet” (No. 6, 2000) (see IRIS 2002-7: 3).

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, General Policy Recommendation No. 12 on combating racism and racial discrimination in the field of sport, Doc. No. CRI(2009)5, 19 March 2009

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N12/Recommendation_12_en.asp

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026