

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

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On 15 September 2009, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) made public its latest reports on the Czech Republic, Greece and Switzerland, adopted in the fourth round of its monitoring 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 2009-8: 5, IRIS 2009-5: 4, IRIS 2008-4: 6, IRIS 2006-6: 4 and IRIS 2005-7: 3).

Three main recommendations dealing with the (audiovisual) media and/or the Internet can be distilled from relevant sections of these reports. First, in each of the reports, ECRI encourages the State authorities to impress on the media, without encroaching on their editorial independence, the need to ensure that their output does not contribute to (the creation of) an atmosphere of hostility and rejection towards members of minority groups. The precise formulation of this recommendation varies slightly in each report (paras. 58, 89 and 102, respectively), but its essence remains the same. This particular recommendation features consistently in ECRI's country reports.

It is supplemented in the reports on the Czech Republic and Switzerland by the recommendation that the State authorities engage with the media and relevant civil society organisations in order to ascertain the best way to achieve this goal (paras. 58 and 102, respectively). In the report on Greece, it is supplemented by the recommendation that the State authorities "support any initiatives taken by the media in this field and supply them with the necessary resources to provide initial and in-service training in human rights in general and racism issues in particular" (para. 89).

The second main recommendation directed at media activities concerns law enforcement/prosecution, e.g., "against journalists and media who incite racial hatred" (Report on Greece, para. 88) or "persons responsible for publishing and disseminating racist material via the internet" (Report on the Czech Republic, para. 60). A comparable recommendation does not feature in the Report on Switzerland.

The third main recommendation is only made in respect of the Czech Republic. It comprises an invitation to media professionals "to adopt codes of self-regulation

concerning the manner of reporting about issues involving members of minority groups” and a recommendation to the State authorities “to encourage and facilitate this process wherever possible” (para. 59).

ECRI Reports on the Czech Republic, Greece and Switzerland (fourth monitoring cycle), all adopted on 2 April 2009 and published on 15 September 2009

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/default_EN.asp?

