European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: Media Provisions in Report on Ireland

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On 19 February 2013, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published its latest reports on Ireland and Liechtenstein, adopted in the fourth monitoring cycle of the laws, policies and practices to combat racism in the member states of the Council of Europe (commentary on previous reports see IRIS 2003-5/3, IRIS 2005-7/2 and IRIS 2007-8/102). Only the report on Ireland contains a section focusing specifically on the media/Internet.

In its fourth report, ECRI welcomes the positive developments in Ireland, including the establishment of the Office of the Press Ombudsman and the Press Council. They provide a new system of independent regulation. A voluntary Code of Practice for Newspapers and Magazines (thereafter Code of Practice) was also adopted in 2007.

Article 8 of the new Code of Practice prohibits newspapers and magazines from publishing “material intended or likely to cause grave offence or stir up hatred against an individual or group on the basis of their race, religion, nationality, colour or ethnic origin, membership of the travelling community, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, illness or age”. ECRI assesses that the Article was invoked in 74 complaints in 2008 and in 36 cases in 2010.

ECRI also acknowledges that since the last report, the Broadcasting Act 2009 has “consolidated the corpus of broadcasting legislation (…) and revised the law relating to broadcasting services and content”. ECRI welcomes the establishment of the Broadcasting Authority and its role in the development of different codes on programme and advertising content on radio and TV to combat any kind of discrimination and racism.

The section of the report on “public discourse and media” concludes with a recommendation. Competent authorities are encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of the new Code of Practice as a tool to combat racism and xenophobic discourse. In addition, national authorities are invited to support initiatives by media to raise awareness on human rights and on issues relating to racism and racial discrimination.

ECRI Report on Ireland (fourth monitoring cycle), adopted on 5 December 2012 and published on 19 February 2013

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http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Ireland/IRL-CbC-IV-2013-001-ENG.pdf

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