European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: Media Provisions in the Conclusions on the Implementation of Recommendations in Respect of Austria

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On 19 February 2013, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published its conclusions on the implementation of its recommendations made in the country reports of Albania, Austria, Estonia and the United Kingdom in its fourth monitoring round (for commentary on previous reports, see IRIS 2010-4/3, IRIS 2009-10/10, IRIS 2009-8/4, IRIS 2009-5/4, IRIS 2008-4/5, IRIS 2006-6/4, IRIS 2005-7/2).

A new process of interim follow-up has been introduced as part of the fourth monitoring cycle. Based on information gathered by ECRI itself and provided by governments, ECRI draws conclusions on the way recommendations have been followed up.

Only the conclusions relating to Austria contain provisions relevant to the media/Internet. In its fourth monitoring report relating to Austria (see IRIS 2010-4/3), ECRI recommended that “the Austrian authorities promote the reestablishment of a regulatory mechanism for the press, compatible with the principle of media independence that would make it possible to enforce compliance with ethical standards and rules of conduct including the refusal to promote, in any form, racism, xenophobia, antisemitism or intolerance”.

ECRI acknowledges that in 2010 the Austrian Press Council was re-established as a voluntary self-regulatory institution to “safeguard editorial quality and guarantee freedom of the press”. The Council has since set ethical guidelines by means of a code of honour for journalists. The code provides guidance in the prevention of discrimination (race, religion, gender, national origin, etc.) and is used as a basis for the Press Council on complaints. ECRI points out several positive outcomes such as: the publication of the decisions of the Press Council, the power of the Press Council to issue decisions against newspapers that are not members of the Council and the annual allowance granted by the State to the Council to cover its costs.

ECRI considers that the next step would be to “encourage all major newspapers to join the Press Council and to extend the Council’s competence to cover electronic

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media, radio and television".

The conclusions were adopted on 4 December 2012. They constitute specific interim recommendations and are not intended to provide an overall analysis of all developments to combat racism and intolerance in the country under review.

ECRI Conclusions on the implementation of the recommendations in respect of Austria subject to interim follow-up, 19 February 2013

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Austria/AUT-IFU-IV-2013-004-ENG.pdf

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