

ECRI

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
Commission européenne contre le racisme et l'intolérance

CRI(2007)6

ECRI GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATION No. 10

ON COMBATING RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN AND THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

ADOPTED ON 15 DECEMBER 2006

Strasbourg, 21 March 2007



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Published by the
European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)
Council of Europe - 2007
Printed in Strasbourg

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI):

Having regard to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

Having regard to the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;

Having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

Having regard to the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education;

Having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights, in particular its Article 14 and Article 2 of its Protocol No.1;

Having regard to Protocol No.12 to the European Convention on Human Rights, which contains a general clause prohibiting discrimination;

Having regard to the European Social Charter (Revised) and in particular Article 17 thereof;

Having regard to the Additional Protocol to the Convention on cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems;

Having regard to Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2000)4 to member States on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe;

Having regard to Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2001)15 to member States on history teaching in twenty-first century Europe;

Having regard to Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2002)12 to member States on education for democratic citizenship;

Having regard to Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1093(1989) on the education of migrants' children;

Having regard to Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1346(1997) on human rights education;

Having regard to Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1720(2005) on education and religion;

Taking into account the general conclusions adopted by the European Conference against Racism on 13 October 2000, in particular those concerning education and awareness-raising to combat racism, related discrimination and extremism at sub-national, national, regional and international levels;

Taking into account the Commentary on Education under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted by the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention;

Recalling ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.3 on combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies; ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.5 on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims; ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.9 on the fight against antisemitism;

Recalling ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination;

Recalling that ECRI's mandate is to combat racism and racial discrimination, that is to combat violence, discrimination and prejudice faced by persons or groups of persons on grounds such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin;

Stressing that the scope of this Recommendation is limited to pre-primary, primary and secondary education;

Aware however that in higher education combating racism and racial discrimination is equally important;

Aware also that informal and non formal education can play a significant role in this field;

Aware that civil society organisations are implementing effective anti-discrimination education and diversity training programmes for youth within the school environment;

Recalling that education is an important tool for combating racism and intolerance, and yet aware that it is also an area in which racism and racial discrimination can exist, with harmful consequences for children and society as a whole;

Rejecting all forms of direct and indirect discrimination in access to schooling;

Recalling that national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination should cover, among others, the field of education and that the prohibition of discrimination should apply to all public authorities as well as to all natural or legal persons, both in the public and in the private sectors;

Recalling that school education is a right and that access to it should be granted to all children present on the territory of member States, regardless of their legal status or that of their parents, and independently of the laws on asylum, immigration and acquisition of citizenship;

Convinced that quality education includes also diversity;

Convinced that schools must recognise and respect diversity;

Deploring the existence, sometimes, of de facto segregation in school education which is due to historical factors or to external factors such as the housing problem;

Stressing that measures to ensure the integration of children from minority groups in the school system must not in fact lead to forcible assimilation;

Emphasising that special measures can improve the access of children from minority groups to school education and to good teaching;

Recalling that human rights education based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, tolerance and respect for diversity can play a key role in combating racism and intolerance in general;

Convinced of the need to ensure that all schools conform to satisfactory standards in respect of teaching in these areas;

Recalling the importance of ensuring that school textbooks and other teaching aids not spread prejudice and stereotypes;

Aware of the growing importance of modern technology, including the Internet, in school education and the need for this to be taken into account for questions relating to the fight against racism and racial discrimination;

Convinced of the need for mandatory training on teaching in a multicultural context to be given to all educational staff;

Convinced of the importance of initial and on-going training for educational staff in matters pertaining to human rights and combating racial discrimination;

Urging that all school authorities be placed under an obligation to promote equality and that progress on compliance with this obligation be properly monitored;

Recommends that the governments of member States:

I. Ensure compulsory, free and quality education for all, and to this end:

1. undertake, in conjunction with civil society organisations, studies on the situation of children from minority groups in the school system, by compiling statistics on their: attendance and completion rates; drop-out rates; results achieved and progress made;
2. gather the information required to identify problems facing pupils from minority groups in the school environment in order to introduce policies to solve these problems;
3. conceive, at national and regional level, in co-operation with the minority groups concerned, policies to further attendance and full participation of pupils from minority groups, on an equal footing, in the school system:
 - a) by ensuring that schools have an obligation to promote equality in education;
 - b) by devising, in consultation with all the parties concerned and taking into account the socio-economic dimension (employment and housing) policies to avoid, in the best interests of the child, pupils from minority groups being over-represented in certain schools;
 - c) by making provision, in particular cases and for a limited period of time, for preparatory classes for pupils from minority groups to, amongst others, learn the language of instruction, if this is justified by objective and reasonable criteria and is in the best interests of the child;
 - d) by introducing policies to avoid placing children from minority groups in separate classes;
 - e) by ensuring that policies promoting more diversity at school are supported by awareness-raising measures targeting pupils, the pupils' parents and educational staff;
 - f) by ensuring that teaching staff from minority groups are recruited at all levels and that they are not subjected to racial discrimination in the school system;
 - g) by ensuring that parents of pupils from minority groups are sufficiently informed of the consequences of any special measures envisaged for their children to allow for an informed consent;
 - h) by providing parents of pupils from minority groups who do not speak the majority language the necessary resources, such as the services of an interpreter and/or language courses, to enable them to communicate with the educational staff;
 - i) by ensuring that parents of pupils from minority groups can fully participate in the school's decisions and activities;
 - j) by having recourse, where necessary, to school mediators or any regional, national or NGO mediation service, to facilitate the integration in school of children from minority groups and to ensure good communication between parents and the school authorities;

II. Combat racism and racial discrimination at school, and to this end:

1. ensure that schools are obliged to incorporate the fight against racism and racial discrimination as well as respect for diversity into the way that they are run:
 - a) by ensuring that the fight against such phenomena in schools, whether they emanate from pupils or educational staff, is part of a permanent policy;
 - b) by setting up a system to monitor racist incidents at school and compile data on these phenomena in order to devise long-term policies to counter them;
 - c) by adopting, in order to combat incidents of racism or discrimination which do not cause physical harm, educational measures such as, for example, non formal education activities in organisations dealing with victims of racism and racial discrimination;
 - d) by treating incitement to racial hatred in schools and any other serious racist act, including the use of violence, threats or damage to property, as acts punishable by suspension or expulsion or any other appropriate measure;
 - e) by encouraging within schools the adoption of a code of conduct against racism and racial discrimination for all staff;
 - f) by favouring measures (such as special anti-racism days or weeks, campaigns or competitions) to foster awareness among both pupils and parents of racism and racial discrimination issues and the relevant school policies;
2. ensure that school education plays a key-role in the fight against racism and racial discrimination in society:
 - a) by ensuring that human rights education is an integral part of the school curriculum at all levels and across all disciplines, from nursery school onwards;
 - b) by ensuring that pupils are given an instruction on religion which complies with the scientific neutrality essential in any educational approach;
 - c) by ensuring that, where public schools provide denominational religious education, easy procedures of discharge are in place for children for whom an exemption is requested;
 - d) by removing from textbooks any racist material or material that encourages stereotypes, intolerance or prejudice against any minority group;
 - e) by promoting critical thinking among pupils and equipping them with the necessary skills to become aware of and react to stereotypes or intolerant elements contained in material they use;
 - f) by revising school textbooks to ensure that they reflect more adequately the diversity and plurality of the society, and include, to this end, minority groups' contribution to society;
 - g) by ensuring that the quality of school textbooks is regularly monitored in co-operation with all concerned so as to remove any racist or discriminatory elements;
 - h) by teaching pupils to use the Internet as a means of learning how to combat racism and racial discrimination, while providing for the necessary resources, such as filtering software, to protect them against any racist messages;
 - i) by ensuring that bodies involved in monitoring the quality of education, such as Ministries of Education and/or School Inspectorates regularly include monitoring of racism and racial discrimination in their work;

III. Train the entire teaching staff to work in a multicultural environment, and to this end:

1. provide them, at all levels, with initial and on-going training to prepare them to educate and respond to the needs of pupils from different backgrounds;
2. provide them with initial and on-going training designed to foster awareness of issues pertaining to racism and racial discrimination and of the harmful consequences these have on the ability of children who are victims of these phenomena to succeed at school;
3. ensure that they receive training on anti-discrimination legislation at national level;
4. ensure that they are trained to prevent at school any manifestations of racism and racial discrimination, including indirect and structural discrimination, and to react promptly and effectively when faced with such problems;
5. provide them with initial and on-going training in issues relating to human rights and racial discrimination, which covers, inter alia, the following:
 - a) international and European standards;
 - b) the use of teaching material specifically intended for teaching human rights, including the right to equality; and
 - c) the use of interactive and participatory teaching methods;
6. provide a framework in which the members of the teaching profession can regularly share experiences and update methods used for teaching human rights, including the right to equality;

IV. Ensure that all the policies advocated above receive the necessary financial resources and that they are regularly monitored to assess their impact and adjust them when necessary.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe is a political organisation which was founded on 5 May 1949 by ten European countries in order to promote greater unity between its members. It now numbers 46 European States.¹

The main aims of the Organisation are to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and to develop common responses to political, social, cultural and legal challenges in its member States. Since 1989 it has integrated most of the countries of central and eastern Europe and supported them in their efforts to implement and consolidate their political, legal and administrative reforms.

The Council of Europe has its permanent headquarters in Strasbourg (France). By Statute, it has two constituent organs: the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe represents the entities of local and regional self-government within the member States.

The European Court of Human Rights is the judicial body competent to adjudicate complaints brought against a State by individuals, associations or other contracting States on grounds of violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION AGAINST RACISM AND INTOLERANCE

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) is a monitoring body established by the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Council of Europe. The decision to establish ECRI is contained in the Vienna Declaration adopted by the first Summit on 9 October 1993. The European Conference against Racism, held in Strasbourg in October 2000, called for the strengthening of ECRI's action. On 13 June 2002, the Committee of Ministers adopted a new Statute for ECRI, consolidating its role as an independent human rights monitoring body on issues related to racism and racial discrimination.

The members of ECRI serve in their individual capacity and are independent. The task of ECRI is to combat racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance at the level of greater Europe and from the perspective of the protection of human rights. ECRI's action covers all necessary measures to combat violence, discrimination and prejudice faced by persons or groups of persons, notably on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality and national or ethnic origin.

ECRI's programme of activities comprises three aspects: country-by-country approach; work on general themes; activities in relation with civil society.

*For further information on ECRI and its activities, please contact:
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¹ Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

