

Texts adopted by Parliament

Thursday 16 March 2000 - Strasbourg
Countering racism in the candidate countries

Final edition

A5-0055/2000

► European Parliament resolution on the Commission communication: Countering racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism in the candidate countries (COM(1999) 256 - C5-0094/1999 - 1999/2099(COS))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the communication from the Commission (COM(1999) 256 - C5-0094/1999),
 - having regard to Articles 2, 6 and 29 of the Treaty on European Union,
 - having regard to Articles 2, 3 and 13 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to the reports of the Commission on the candidate countries: on Bulgaria COM(1999) 501 , Cyprus COM(1999) 502 , the Czech Republic COM(1999) 503 , Estonia COM(1999) 504 , Hungary COM(1999) 505 , Latvia COM(1999) 506 , Lithuania COM(1999) 507 , Malta COM(1999) 508 , Poland COM(1999) 509 , Romania COM(1999) 510 , Slovakia COM(1999) 511 , Slovenia COM(1999) 512 and Turkey COM(1999) 514 ,
 - having regard to its most recent resolutions of 30 January 1997⁽⁹⁾ on racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism and the European Year against Racism (1997), of 29 January 1998⁽¹⁰⁾ on racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism and the results of the European Year against Racism (1997) and of 18 December 1998⁽¹¹⁾ on the Commission communication on an Action plan against Racism (1998),
 - having regard to the forthcoming World Conference against Racism, to be held in 2001 in South Africa,
 - having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy and the opinions of the Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market (**A5-0055/2000**),
- A. whereas the principle of the oneness of humankind and the requirement of respect for the dignity of the individual are central values in European culture,
- B. whereas racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism are a serious threat to the democratic principles of the EU, infringe human rights and poison European society; whereas respect for human diversity is a European core value,
- C. welcoming the fact that the Amsterdam Treaty marked a major milestone by ending the controversy over the power of the EU institutions to implement anti-racism policies, by establishing for the first time in the new Article 29 of the EU Treaty and the new Article 13 of the EC Treaty that not only is the fight against racism and xenophobia an explicit European Union objective, but racial discrimination is a breach of a fundamental right under EU law,
- D. applauding the proposals for anti-discrimination legislation under Article 13, and noting that these will form part of the Community acquis which the candidate countries will be required to implement before accession, thus making a substantial contribution to increasing the protection afforded to the victims of discrimination in the candidate countries,
- E. whereas the EU and its Member States are committed to vigorously tackling racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism within the EU, although there is a need for a greater sense of urgency and resolve in this respect,

F. whereas the fundamental freedoms of free movement and establishment must not be jeopardised by institutionalised racism in candidate countries,

G. whereas those freedoms are not only key aspects of the Internal Market, but also assist ethnic and national minorities in overcoming disadvantage and marginalisation,

H. aware of the fact that, just as in the European Union, there are problems in the candidate countries with regard to discrimination against members of ethnic groups or other minorities - be they citizens, legal or illegal residents, refugees or asylum seekers - and also political demonstrations of organised racism,

I. alarmed that in several candidate countries the Roma and Gypsy minorities suffer severe discrimination, harassment and violence, not only from the public but also from the police, judiciary and other state authorities as well as from the media and some politicians; welcoming, however, the efforts being made by some countries such as Slovenia to improve the situation of the Roma and urging the continuation and increase in financing by EU programmes of projects to assist them,

J. whereas political, cultural and social discrimination against major national minorities, in particular the Kurdish population, continues to be a reality ,

K. noting that the Kurdish minority in Turkey is not recognised as such by the Turkish State, and the challenge to that state to reconcile the strong sense of national identity and the wish to preserve the unity of the state with the right of the Kurds to express their own ethnic, cultural and political identity,

L. whereas action to tackle these problems has consisted hitherto of statutory measures at Member State level and social measures (see the action programmes),

M. whereas the EU is currently negotiating with certain countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean region on accession to the Union,

N. stressing that assessing whether the candidate countries satisfy the Copenhagen accession criteria involves evaluating whether they respect minority rights,

O. whereas it is of vital importance to take decisive action to assist the candidate countries in tackling these problems,

P. whereas there are marked differences and great variations between the candidate countries in their approaches to these problems,

1. Welcomes the Commission communication as proof of the European Union's intention to help candidate countries vigorously combat racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism, but regrets the vague nature of the analysis and in particular the lack of any effective specific proposals;

2. Believes, furthermore, that this declaration of intent comes rather late in the day, given that preparations for, and negotiations on, membership started a number of years ago;

3. Urges that a clear human rights strategy for combating racism, xenophobia and intolerance be implemented in close partnership between the EU, the European Monitoring Centre, the Council of Europe (ECRI) and the OSCE, with complementary activities and programmes;

4. Calls on the Council and Commission to affirm unambiguously that racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic acts or propaganda would breach the principles to be upheld under Article 6(1) of the EU Treaty, and would trigger a determined application of the procedures under Article 7;

5. Stresses the importance of providing adequate budgetary resources for both the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), and the human rights and protection of minorities projects in the Meda programme, with a particular emphasis on promotion of minority rights and reform of the police, criminal justice and asylum systems;

6. Calls on both the Member States and the candidate countries to ensure that their policies towards asylum-seekers, refugees and immigrants are free of xenophobia and racism and provide a proper

statutory framework of rights, with full respect for the Geneva Convention on Refugees;

7. Regrets that the Commission communication proposes no specific action to combat discrimination against these groups in the candidate countries and therefore calls for appropriate measures to be taken and for special financial measures under PHARE, in particular with a view to backing up initiatives in civil society to counter racism and racist tendencies;

8. Is of the opinion that the Commission has paid too little attention to devising a juridical strategy against racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism, in particular by promoting adequate legislation in candidate countries;

9. If of the opinion that the EU, too, in the context of what it expects in the pre-accession strategy, should ensure that, in the process of social transformation in the candidate countries and with regard to adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, measures are taken to prevent social conflict in the candidate countries, thereby averting the risk of racism and racist tendencies;

10. Takes note of the Commission's proposals, under Article 13 of the EC Treaty, to combat discrimination and to develop initiatives against racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism within the context of the new education, youth and training programmes in the hope that, if implemented, these initiatives would give a clear signal to the citizens of the accession countries;

11. Points out that the prime responsibilities for combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination against ethnic groups must rest with the authorities and civil society in each candidate country; calls therefore on the candidate countries themselves to pursue further action in combating racism and xenophobia in the relevant areas;

12. Calls on the candidate countries to implement legislation similar to expected EU laws and with effective enforcement bodies; to counter institutional racism; to protect minorities; to safeguard minority languages; to eliminate racism in public life, housing and employment; and to develop their educational programmes to broaden awareness of the dangers of racism and xenophobia;

13. Calls for full attention to be paid to countering racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism in the educational and training programmes for police officers, officials of judicial authorities and other public sector officials, and in particular those who are in direct contact with the general public;

14. Urges all political parties to sign and observe the '*Charter of European Parties for a Non-Racist Society*', to condemn intolerance and racist remarks or behaviour and refrain from fielding candidates in alliance with or working in cooperation with political groups that exploit racism and xenophobia;

15. Urges the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements between countries, in particular neighbouring states, in order to facilitate 'cross-protection' of national minorities;

16. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (in Vienna) makes an appropriate contribution to extending the fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism to the candidate countries and that it will cooperate as closely as possible with the Council of Europe's ECRI;

17. Asks the European Monitoring Centre to prepare short reports on each candidate country, indicating the minimum practical steps necessary to reach EU standards in respect of the fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism;

18. Calls on the candidate countries to collect, as a basis for policy action, reliable monitoring data on ethnic, linguistic, and religious minority groups including immigrants and refugees, the number and outcome of racist acts reported and prosecuted, and the performance of minority groups in the economic and social spheres;

19. Looks forward to the reinforced political dialogue with Turkey announced by the European Council in Helsinki in December 1999 and calls on Turkey to recognise the social, cultural, and political rights of the Kurdish population and other minorities and foster the exercise of those rights;

20. Calls on the Commission and the candidate countries concerned to pursue and continue, on a

consistent basis, the measures to integrate and afford equal opportunities to the Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia;

21. Is firmly of the opinion that, in the context of the EIDHR, the Commission should support special measures to counter racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism in the candidate countries;

22. Stresses the importance of involving NGOs, both in the Union and in the candidate countries, in this struggle in recognition of their educational role within civil society; considers that they must therefore be given adequate financial support so as to facilitate their efforts, as undertaken by active citizens working for a more open, pluralistic and democratic society, and that all of this must be done in close cooperation with the Council of Europe, the UN and the OSCE;

23. Considers that both grass-roots organisations such as churches, the trade union movement, women's and youth organisations and institutions such as universities and colleges of education should be involved;

24. Is of the opinion that ethnic group organisations should also be involved because of the importance of action under the anti-racism policy being supported by such groups who should undertake some responsibility and take some initiatives of their own;

25. Stresses that the appeal for effective action against racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism in the candidate countries does not in any way imply that these social phenomena are not a serious problem within the EU, where many of these problems are also found;

26. Regrets the rise of organised racism in a number of the candidate countries and calls for coordination of legislation against racial discrimination (in conjunction with Council of Europe action programmes); urges the EU and candidate countries to cooperate closely to combat extremist and criminal racist organisations and organised crime including trafficking in migrants, and for both to pursue vigorously the prosecution of violent racist offences;

27. Considers that effective action will involve not only appropriate constitutional arrangements and the separation of powers but also the proper functioning of local courts and the local civil service, and calls on the Commission to monitor these aspects;

28. Considers that the media have a very important role in conveying messages and imparting values to society as a whole and that Member States and candidate countries alike must encourage and promote the drawing-up of codes of conduct by their own media to prevent the communication of racist, xenophobic or anti-semitic images and messages;

29. Calls on the Commission to provide a written analysis of the specific contribution of the PHARE programme and the associated programmes to the fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism;

30. Takes the view, given the social implications of racism and xenophobia, that the Commission Directorate-General responsible for employment and social affairs should conduct scientific studies on the effects of these phenomena on social and employment issues both within the Union and in the candidate countries;

31. Considers that the Commission should appraise the extent to which national minorities have been able to benefit from the right of establishment set out in the existing Association Agreements and should act on the results of that appraisal;

32. Urges Member States and the applicant countries to promote acceptance of differences and tolerance through their educational systems; takes the view that, in some cases, this may require the revision and adaptation of the contents of textbooks which could incite racism, xenophobia or anti-semitism or any other form of intolerance or discrimination;

33. Calls for radical reinforcement of coordination of national, multinational and European action programmes for Roma minorities, giving a high priority to education, health care and the representation of Roma in public life and including campaigns to support NGOs and combat prejudice; requests the Commission to consider regrouping the different EU programmes for Roma in one comprehensive programme in the interests of effectiveness and transparency; calls on the Commission to present proposals in 2000 for such an approach based on a joint framework devised by the EU and the

candidate countries in question, with objectives and timetables;

34. Considers that respect for religious freedom, religious monuments and establishments and religious tolerance are of special importance in combating racism and related phenomena;

35. Calls on the candidate countries as well as the Member States to sign, ratify and implement not only the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination but also the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families;

36. Calls for an information policy on the existence of religious minorities in the CEECs, and proper legislative solutions to be aimed at protecting their rights;

37. Calls on the Commission to submit a comparative analytical table for all the candidate countries covering the subjects referred to in this resolution, using identical criteria for comparison;

38. Calls for constant political and social vigilance towards, and more severe penalties for, the unremitting expressions of anti-semitism in a number of candidate countries, not least in the light of fairly widespread latent anti-semitic feelings and thoughts;

39. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey.

(1) OJ C 55, 24.2.1997, p. 17.

(2) OJ C 56, 23.2.1998, p. 35.

(3) OJ C 98, 9.4.1999, p. 491.