



Report of OSCE-ODIHR Roundtable

Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Racism in the OSCE Region: Old Issues, New Challenges

Vienna, 20 March 2009

Agenda

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| 10:00-10:30 | WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS |
| 10:30 - 12:30 | <p>Plenary Session: Emerging Trends and Developments related to New Forms and Manifestations of Racism and Xenophobia</p> <p>The Plenary session will provide the participants with an opportunity to discuss broad range of issues related to racism and xenophobia, identify major challenges and new emerging trends. Presentations of the keynote speakers will focus on different aspects of racism: visible differences, identity, status, multiple discrimination, gender etc.</p> |
| 12:30 - 13:30 | Lunch |
| 13:30 - 15:30 | <p>Simultaneous thematic discussions in two working groups</p> <p>Working groups will discuss specific issues and areas of interest with a view to identify recommendations for participating States (including local authorities and specialized bodies) and possible new priorities of the OSCE/ODIHR in combating racism and xenophobia.</p> <p>Working group 1: Racialisation of culture and religion</p> <p>The aim of this WG is to examine how the old concept of perceived “distinct and incompatible human races” have changed and mutated into the idea of a “clash of cultures” or “clash of civilizations and how this idea led to assigning certain religious characteristics to people of particular origin, even if they are non-religious.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Incompatibility of cultures” – new manifestation of racism ? - Religious aspect of racism <p>Working group 2: Racism and Xenophobia in time of economic crisis - situation of migrants and minorities</p> <p>Increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of societies is the inevitable consequence of globalisation. Increased migration means that a growing number of States have become or are becoming more multi-ethnic, and are confronted with the challenge of involving persons of different cultures, religions and languages. As Governments grapple with the new realities of their multi-ethnic societies, acts of discrimination and violence directed against migrants, refugees and other non-nationals continue to take place throughout the OSCE region.¹</p> <p>As the effects of economic crisis start to hit the societies across the OSCE region, migrants and various minority groups are often becoming “scapegoats” and targets of increased hostility and xenophobia.</p> |

¹ See ODIHR Report “Hate crimes in the OSCE region : incidents and responses - annual report for 2006”, p. 16-18, http://www.osce.org/publications/odihr/2007/09/26296_931_en.pdf

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| | <p>This WG aims to focus on several issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the economic crisis contributes to xenophobia, who are the most vulnerable groups • What is the connection between economic crisis and the increased activities of organised hate groups • What is the role of political discourse and political parties in both countering and fostering xenophobia • What are the sources of these developments, • What measures could pS take to stop such trends or to minimise their effects |
| 15:30-16:00 | Coffee break |
| 16:00 - 16:30 | Closing Session |

Introduction

OSCE participating States acknowledge that racism poses a continuing threat to peaceful co-existence and community cohesion in many parts of the OSCE region. In recent years the problem has been fuelled by the worldwide economic downturn, migration, negative political discourse, public perceptions and other factors. The persistence of old forms of racism and the emergence of new ones call for increased attention to this phenomenon.

Participating States have also repeatedly affirmed the need to fight manifestations of racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance. ODIHR has been given a mandate to assist in this task. As part of a wide-ranging effort to promote dialogue and action against racism, ODIHR sponsored a roundtable in Vienna on the occasion of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,² aimed at developing recommendations for action by governments, OSCE institutions and other relevant actors, as well as to help guide ODIHR's future activities in the field.

The roundtable was opened by Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, Director of ODIHR, together with Ms. Eva Smith Asmussen, Chair of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Ms. Anastasia Crickley, Chair of the Management Board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), and Mr. Githu Muigai, UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Participants included other key partners from international organizations, representatives of civil society and government officials. The meeting served as an opportunity to exchange views on recent developments and to discuss practical measures and best practices for addressing different aspects of the problem.

This report presents a summary of the main topics of discussion during the roundtable. The positions presented at the roundtable and in this report do not necessarily reflect the position of the OSCE or of ODIHR. To the extent possible and within its mandate, the recommendations emerging from the roundtable will be followed up by ODIHR.

² In 1966, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21 March the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in memory of 69 people killed at a peaceful demonstration against apartheid in Sharpeville, South Africa.

The Economic Crisis and Racism

The link between the economic crisis and manifestations of racism was a theme addressed in many speeches and presentations. Several speakers highlighted that migrants, refugees and minority groups within the OSCE region are particularly vulnerable during times of economic crisis. Yet even during relatively stable economic periods, many minority groups are discriminated against on the labour market, have limited access to education or health care, and face social exclusion and poverty. An economic downturn tends to exacerbate this economic inequality and may be felt acutely by the more vulnerable members of society, including migrants, refugees and minorities.

Some participants stressed that government budgetary decisions can have a discriminatory effect on the most vulnerable members of society. For example, social assistance programs, which provide support to such groups, are often subject to funding cuts during periods of austerity. Integration programs for immigrants are often publicly funded and are also vulnerable to funding cuts.

In their presentations, participants pointed out that when the economy is weakened, migrants and minorities are often viewed as competitors for scarce resources and are vulnerable to “scapegoating”. In a depressed economy, migrants may be seen by “mainstream” populations as competitors for scarce jobs and social services and thus as a threat to their livelihoods or standard of living. Alternatively, minority group members may be labelled as a burden to society. Some speakers noted an increase in racist and xenophobic rhetoric accompanying the economic downturn, with migrants and minority group members sometimes being blamed for economic problems. Such accusations can lead to increased racist sentiments and can exacerbate the social exclusion of migrants and minorities.

Some speakers noted that among minority and migrant groups, Roma community members have been particularly vulnerable throughout the OSCE region.

Participants pointed out that the positive economic contributions of minorities and migrants are seldom recognized and may be distorted or falsely reported. There is a lack of understanding that the economies of many countries would suffer without migrant labour. Some speakers, however,

cautioned against placing too much emphasis on the economic contributions of migrants and minority group members. These speakers contended that the economic argument shifts the focus away from the human rights perspective, which requires governments to ensure the same rights and responsibilities for all members of society.

Political Discourse on Migration Issues

A second issue highlighted at several sessions of the roundtable was the political discourse surrounding migration. Speakers underscored that in times of deepening economic crisis, there is an increased need for politicians and other public figures to carefully consider their statements, in order to avoid inciting or inflaming ethnic, racial and religious tensions.

A number of participants asserted that politicians sometimes use racist rhetoric for political gain. Some politicians and political parties have been very effective in reframing labour issues in a divisive manner, capitalizing, for political ends, on public fears or prejudices against minorities or migrants. Participants noted that racist and xenophobic political platforms are widespread; this, they contended, attests to a collective failure to combat racism effectively. Several speakers pointed out that there has been an increase in the support garnered by political parties and organizations which openly express racist, discriminatory and xenophobic views. In Western Europe, this was seen by some as being coupled with the lack of leadership from the major political parties, which were said not to have taken a sufficiently strong anti-racist stance.

Some participants from Eastern European countries and the CIS stated that the same problem exists in their areas. All sides in the political spectrum often share views prejudicial to migration and refugees. A number of government officials consider the mere presence of refugees and migrants as unjustified or undesirable. The temptation is strong for politicians to use migrants as scapegoats for economic or political problems and to propose simplistic solutions such as sending all migrants back to where they came from.

A few speakers contended that the current meltdown of the global economic system has resulted in an increase of hate speech, racist political platforms, distrust and violence. To deal with these

challenges, participants called on the international community, including the OSCE, to address the issues of simplification of economic or social concerns and the stigmatization of groups based on the nationality, or the ethnic or national origin of their members. Speakers called for a clear stance against politicians and members of the media who propagate racist discourse.

Institutional Challenges to Combating Racism and Xenophobia

Among the problems of responding effectively to racism and xenophobia are institutional barriers and challenges, which sometimes impede positive policies and good intentions. Some presentations underscored that although comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation has been adopted recently in several countries, the implementation remains a problem. By the same token, a number of countries have adopted national action plans or national policies against racism, but the impact of these programs at the local level is often limited. A lack of coordination among different state actors (ministries, agencies, law enforcement) may also diminish the impact of such initiatives.

A related issue highlighted by many participants was the reluctance or inability of local authorities and national governments to allocate the resources necessary to actually carry out measures foreseen in national anti-racism policies. Moreover, even if resources are available, there may be a lack of effort by local authorities to implement national policies in the absence of strong political will and vigorous leadership at the national level. This suggests that national governments should constantly review and evaluate the implementation of their policies and should play a greater role in overseeing implementation at the local level.

Participants also discussed the problem of institutionalized racism and discrimination. Often, seemingly neutral policies may have discriminatory effects on certain groups. Such practices may, for example, include personnel merit systems and academic testing practices that result in the promotion or admission of disproportionately small numbers of minorities. Such systemic discrimination may often be unintentional, but it can work on a subtle level to perpetuate or increase racial or ethnic inequalities.

“Racialisation” of Religion

A concept introduced by one speaker that sparked an active discussion was the “racialisation of religion”. The initial speaker stressed that it reflects the complex relationship between race and religion and their public perception. The concept suggests that a racial connotation can be extended to a religion, a religious group, or a belief system, although its adherents may include people of many races.

The outcome of this process can be a public perception that race is intertwined with religion and that each religion is seen as a monolithic structure. Any individual with particular physiological features becomes associated with a particular religion. This perception, of course, does not take into consideration the existence of racial diversity within each religion or that some individuals within a racial group practice a different religion or no religion at all. When religion is “racialized”, persons belonging to religious group may become the victims of racist or discriminatory practices as a result of their affiliation with a religion or belief. Another troubling consequence of this process may be that social values and political assumptions are falsely connected to the “racialized” religion.

Many participants found this concept interesting and innovative. They drew attention to the increasing importance of religion as a defining element of personal identity for many migrants. The concept could help explain the inter-linkages between racism and religious intolerance. Islamophobia, for example, may include elements of racism, xenophobia and prejudice against a religious group. The “racialization” of religion may contribute to the misreporting of some hate crimes as crimes against racial groups rather than religious groups.

Perception of Migration and Migrants

In the 21st century, international migration has reached an unprecedented scale. Millions of people have left their home countries, either to seek a better life abroad or because they were forced to leave by natural disasters, war, human rights violations or economic conditions. Some estimates indicate that one in every 60 human beings is an immigrant, migrant worker, refugee or asylum-

seeker. Many OSCE countries are becoming increasingly diverse as a result of migration, a process that is likely to continue.

Participants raised the question of how different countries will cope with the increasing diversity of their population. They underscored that many migrants face xenophobic reactions and discriminatory barriers in their host countries. Throughout the discussion, participants reiterated that the public often confuses refugees and asylum-seekers with economic migrants or with illegal migrants.

Public perceptions of migrants may be influenced by racial and other prejudices. Migrants are often portrayed as a danger or a threat to public health, security, economic well-being, national identity and demographic stability. Participants expressed concerns that negative stereotypes and prejudices are used to reinforce such perceptions.

Roundtable Recommendations

The following provides a summary of recommendations that were put forward by roundtable participants. The recommendations were not adopted by the participants and they do not necessarily reflect the consensus of participants at the roundtable. They are directed to participating States, OSCE institutions and civil society.

Recommendations to the OSCE and the International Community

1. Develop and enhance alliances with the media, building national and international networks to ensure that the media serves as a force against, rather than contributor to, racism;
2. Support civil society's efforts to combat racism. Encourage the creation of civil councils in law enforcement bodies to foster a dialogue and build partnerships among authorities, NGOs and affected communities;
3. Recognizing that the Internet is used to propagate racist views, study how the Internet and other new technologies, such as videostreaming, can be used to combat racism;
4. Use public education and awareness campaigns against racism to target diverse groups such as law-enforcement, decision-makers, the media, academia, young people and other segments of society. To be effective, the campaigns should be appropriately marketed and developed in consultation with communities, as well as having adequate budgets and duration;
5. Develop practical programs to address the problems of prejudice, stigmatization, and negative stereotypes based on nationality, ethnic or national origin;
6. Consult youth organisations when designing and implementing policies aimed at fighting against racism, discrimination and other forms of intolerance, in order to ensure their relevance and resonance with youth.

Recommendations to OSCE participating States

1. Recognizing that hate crimes are one of the most serious manifestations of racism, participating States should consider a number of steps to improve the effectiveness of their responses to hate crimes. Such steps should include:
 - Resolving the problem of inadequate data on hate crimes by developing more effective data collection mechanisms. These should provide for the collection of qualitative, disaggregated data, that can be made public and that can be used for analysis, policy planning and implementation;
 - Developing a comprehensive, victim-centred approach to combating hate crimes, which includes prevention, reporting, legal assistance, and social and psychological services;
 - Implementing additional public awareness raising programs on the existence and impact of hate crimes;
 - Providing additional training for police, prosecutors and judges on hate crimes;
 - Supporting programs to build the capacity of civil society to respond to hate crimes, particularly in the area of support to victims;
 - Ensuring that groups at risk for hate crimes are aware of their rights and are encouraged to report racist incidents;
2. Education based on tolerance and mutual respect should be mainstreamed throughout the educational system, beginning with pre-school programs;
3. Since racism affects individuals as well as groups, attention should be devoted to individual victims of racism, through the provision of social services, including medical, psychological and legal assistance;
4. State authorities should support community workers in developing and implementing programs to combat racism;
5. Governments and national leaders should acknowledge the extent of the problem of racism and demonstrate the political will to address it;

6. Recognizing that many international organizations (including ODIHR, FRA and ECRI) and NGOs (including Amnesty International and Human Rights First) have made specific, extensive recommendations in the past with regard to combating racism, participating States should review and implement these recommendations.

List of Participants

Speakers/Moderators:

1. **Ms. Jo-Anne BISHOP**, Head of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department, ODIHR
2. **Ms. Pascale CHARHON**, Director, European Network against Racism, Belgium
3. **Ms. Anastasia CRICKLEY**, Chair of the Management Board, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights
4. **Dr. Khyati Y. JOSHI**, Associate Professor, Fairleigh Dickinson University, USA
5. **Mr. Jeffrey LABOVITZ**, Chief of Ukraine Mission, International Organisation for Migration
6. **Ambassador Janez LENARČIČ**, Director, ODIHR
7. **Ms. Gay McDOUGALL**, Independent Expert on Minority Issues, United Nations
8. **Ambassador Brendan MORAN**, Director, Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities
9. **Mr. Githu MUIGAI**, UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance
10. **Mr. Larry OLOMOOFE**, Expert, European Roma Rights Centre, Budapest, Hungary
11. **Mr. Diogo PINTO**, Secretary General, European Youth Forum, Belgium
12. **Ms. Jamila SEFTAQUI**, Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, OSCE Secretariat
13. **Ms. Eva SMITH ASMUSSEN**, Chair, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
14. **Ms. Simone WOLKEN**, Regional Representative for Eastern Europe, UNHCR

Participants:

15. **Mr. Andreas ACCARDO**, Strategy & Governance Coordinator, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
16. **Ms. Beatrice ACHALEKE**, Executive Director, AFRA – International Center for Black Women's Perspectives, Austria
17. **Ms. Ingrid AENDENBOOM**, Expert, Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, Belgium
18. **Ms. Joanne ANDERSON**, Strategic Performance Advisor, Crown Prosecution Service, UK

19. **Mr. Tarafa BAGHAJATI**, Chair, Austrian Muslim Initiative, Austria
20. **Mr. Azer BAYRAMOV**, Youth Development Public Union, Azerbaijan
21. **Ms. Ilze BRANDS KEHRIS**, Director, Latvian Centre for Human Rights, Riga, Latvia
22. **Ms. Suzette BRONKHORST**, Secretary General, International Network against Cyber Hate, Netherlands
23. **Ms. Stacey BURDETT**, Associate Director of Government and National Affairs, Anti-Defamation League, USA
24. **Mr. Fermin CORDOBA**, Legal Adviser - Human Rights Institutions, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
25. **Dr. Balázs CSUDAY**, Senior Counsellor, UN Department, MFA, Hungary
26. **Ms. Bethan DAVID**, Crown Advocate/Coordinator of Violent Extremism, Crown Prosecution Service, UK
27. **Mr. Ioannis DIMITRAKOPOULOS**, Head of Department Equality and Citizen's Rights, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights
28. **Mr. Ronald EISSENS**, General Director, Magenta Foundation, Netherlands
29. **Mr. Veysel FILIZ**, Vice President, COJEP International, France
30. **Ms. Francesca FRIZ-PRGUDA**, Senior Liaison Officer, UNHCR Liaison Office to OSCE/Vienna-based UN Agencies
31. **Mr. Paul GIANNASI**, Project Leader of the Race Confidence and Justice Unit, Office for Criminal Justice Reform (OJCR), UK
32. **Mr. Martin GLABISCHNIG**, Project Coordinator, United for Intercultural Action, Netherlands
33. **Ms. Xanthippi HASIRTZOGLU**, Deputy Prosecutor, Greek Association of Prosecutors, Greece
34. **Mr. Keenan KELLER**, Senior Counsel, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary, US
35. **Ms. Nasrin KHAN**, Legal Adviser, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department, ODIHR
36. **Ms. Naureen KHAN**, European and International Policy Manager, Equality and Human Rights Commission, UK

37. **Mr. Paul LeGENDRE**, Senior Associate, Discrimination Initiative, Interim Director, Human Rights First, USA
38. **Dr. Miroslav MAREŠ**, Academic, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
39. **Ms. Oonagh McARDLE**, Development Officer, Community Workers Cooperative, Ireland
40. **Mr. Daniel MILO**, Adviser on Combating Racism and Xenophobia, ODIHR
41. **Ms. Margaret O'RIADA**, Galway Travellers Movement, Ireland
42. **Ms. Joanna PERRY**, Policy Advisor (Prosecution Policy), Crown Prosecution Service, UK
43. **Ms. Karin POLLMAN**, Open Society Justice Initiative
44. **Ms. Lucia PRIJAPRATAMA**, Senior Liaison Clerk, UNHCR Liaison Office to OSCE/Vienna-based UN Agencies
45. **Ms. Natalia PROKOPCHUK**, Regional Public Information Officer, UNHCR (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine)
46. **Mr. Jacek PURSKI**, Never Again Association, Poland
47. **Mr. James RODEHAVER**, Director of Human Rights Department, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
48. **Ms. Adeela SHABAZZ**, Forum against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR), UK
49. **Mr. Branko SOČANAC**, Expert, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Croatia
50. **Dr. Mischa THOMPSON**, United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission)
51. **Ms. Khatuna TSINTSADZE**, Director, Union Century 21, Georgia
52. **Mr. Alexander VERKHOVSKY**, Director, Center for Information and Analysis SOVA, Russian Federation
53. **Ms. Frances WEBBER**, Institute of Race Relations, UK