



Associazione culturale “**Giuseppe Dossetti: i Valori**”  
**TUTELA E SVILUPPO DEI DIRITTI**

Osservatorio per la Tolleranza e la Libertà Religiosa  
 Observatory for Religious Tolerance and Freedom

**OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting  
 Combating Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination through Sport**

Vienna, 19-20 April 2012

**Session I: Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination:  
 Contemporary Manifestations and Challenges**

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Despite many commitments adopted by the participating States, we should note with regret that from Vancouver to Vladivostok no part of the OSCE area is immune from manifestations of racism, intolerance and discrimination: both East and West of Vienna many individuals are subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity.

As it was recognized by the Ministerial Council Decision No. 9/09, these episodes affect both minority and majority communities. In this respect it should be noted that a hierarchy between the victims – implying that acts against majority groups are less serious than those against minorities – would be improper: in both cases the inherent dignity of the human person is equally hurt.

Throughout the OSCE region there are recurring hate-motivated incidents and hate crimes against properties or individuals that can even result in the murder of individuals. These events threaten the social cohesion in each participating State, seriously affecting the group that is the victim. Moreover they can be seen as the seed of wider conflicts, triggering a reaction also thousands of kilometres away, to the detriment of the stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian Region.

Participating States have a positive obligation to guarantee that rights are not theoretical or illusory but are practical and effective: not only are they required not to commit acts of violence themselves but they should also adopt an appropriate legislation to prevent and punish such acts, also if perpetrated by private actors. They should also assume all the initiatives which are necessary



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to promote tolerance and non-discrimination (for example educative programmes, awareness campaign and so on). Every time an hate crime occurs, we should ask whether the State has done its best to prevent *ex ante* the crime from being committed and not only to punish it *ex post*.

The above mentioned episodes of violence do not suddenly arise. They are the tragic final act of a slippery road which starts with mockery and social intolerance, then passes through discrimination, also established by law, and from there it ends up with the overt violence. Therefore if the early warning is a fundamental factor, attention should be paid to hate speeches and intolerant public discourse in order to combat incitement to immediate violence. Participating States are also urged to develop concrete measures to prevent prejudice, negative stereotype, misrepresentation in the public discourse and media, including the Internet.

Much work is still to be done. For this reason it is important to focus on fulfilling the existing commitments instead of paying attention to other issues out of the boundaries of the OSCE *acquis*. Let me note that we are going to speak about discrimination and sport. Equal opportunity of persons with disabilities is a very relevant issue on this topic but there is no reference to it in the agenda of the meeting. In the compilation of the Human Dimension commitments we may find just one brief principle concerning persons with disabilities, dating back to Moscow 1991 Final Document. This is not by chance. The OSCE was created as a security organization and therefore it is essential that we focus our efforts on those phenomena able to affect the peace and stability in Europe. Otherwise the Organization risks to become a duplicate of the Council of Europe, broadened to North America and Central Asia. But in my opinion this is not the legacy that we received from the signatories of the Helsinki Final Act.

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