

The logo for the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). It features the letters 'ECRI' in a black serif font, followed by a red stylized lowercase 'i' that has a dot above it and a long, sweeping tail that curves under the 'i'.

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

Tolerance and Integration: The View from ECRI in General and with Regard to Latvia

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Chair, ECRI**



ECRI

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
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□ What is ECRI?

- Council of Europe's independent anti-racism monitoring body, established 1993
- 47 countries/experts + secretariat in Strasbourg
- Broad, evolving mandate: “combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance in greater Europe from the perspective of the protection of human rights”
- Methods: country visits/reports, work on general themes, cooperation w/ civil society



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Racism: belief that “race”, colour, language, religion, nationality or national/ethnic origin justify contempt for a person or the notion of superiority of a group of persons

Racial discrimination: direct/indirect, grounds include “race,” colour, national or ethnic origin, nationality, religion, language

Integration: a two-way process of mutual recognition between the majority population and minority/immigrant groups

- Integration ≠ assimilation
- Key elements: freedom from racism, non-discrimination, equal opportunities for all, freedom of religious beliefs and cultural practices, diversity, respect for others

□ **Fields ECRI most often examines:**

- **Education (combating segregation, learning official language/enabling native language use, multicultural training)**
- **Employment**
- **Health**
- **Housing**
- **Participation in public life**
- **Police**

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- **“Obligatory integration measures” and sanctions for non-compliance:**
 - **Testing of language skills**
 - **Testing “adherence to values”**
 - **Obligatory integration courses**
 - **Integration “contracts”**

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- **Sanctions for “failure to integrate” most often take the form of:**
 - **Refusal of entry visa**
 - **Issuing temporary, not permanent residence permit**
 - **Withdrawal of social/economic benefits**
 - **Refusal to grant citizenship**

□ Issues of concern: Imposition of sanctions

- Proportionality: importance of right?
- Effectiveness: progress indicators?
- Impact – comparative application rates?
- Transparency and judicial recourse?
- Availability of assistance in compliance?
- Exceptions for elderly, disabled, etc.?
- Professionalism/impartiality of evaluators?
- Openness to rescinding sanctions?

□ **Issues of concern: Selective application**

- **Differences between citizens/non-citizens**
- **Differences between Third Country Nationals (TCNs) from countries in certain supranational organisations (e.g., EU, EFTA) and others**
- **Differences between TCNs of different nationalities**

Are differences in treatment objective and reasonable?

- **Issues of concern: climate of opinion**
 - **Debate sometimes assumes racist or xenophobic overtones**
 - **Incidences of stigmatisation**
 - **Incidences of stereotyping**
 - **From a “right” or “need” to integrate to a “duty” or “obligation”**



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□ **ECRI reports on Latvia:**

- **1st report March 1999**
- **2nd report July 2002**
- **3rd report February 2008**
- **4th report being prepared:**
 - **Country visit took place April 2011**
 - **Provisional report to be discussed June 2011**
 - **Confidential dialogue summer/fall 2011**
 - **Final report probably adopted December 2011**

□ Key elements of 3rd report on Latvia:

■ Progress:

- Racism = aggravating circumstance
- Labour Law has clear anti-discrimination provision
- policy documents on integration, tolerance, and Roma
- Promotion of naturalization, language training
- Anti-discrimination unit in Ombudsman

□ **Problems:**

- **Inadequate response to racial attacks**
- **Racist political/media discourse**
- **Slow naturalization**
- **Language discrimination in labour market**
- **Roma exclusion from labour market/education**
- **Need to maintain integration issues high on agenda, focus on inter-cultural cooperation, include newcomers into equation**

□ Key developments since the 2008 report:

- Separate ministry done away with, integration issues now dealt with by Ministry of Culture
- New draft integration guidelines stress Latvian culture & language, no attention to non-citizens
- Roma and Tolerance programmes discontinued
- Ombudsman very weak – anti-discrimination one of 6 new priorities
- Language regulation in private sector expanded

□ **The Role of the Crisis:**

- **Funding slashed and institutions weakened**
- **Naturalisation rate hit new low**
- **Ethnic unemployment gap reemerged**
- **Roma likely hardest hit**
- **Emigration sparks demographic fears, spectre of immigration**
- **Integration and tolerance issues = low priority**

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