

Brussels, 26 November 2001

OPINION

of the

Committee of the Regions

of 14 November 2001

on the

**Report from the Commission on the activities of the
European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia**

(COM(2000) 625 final)

The Committee of the Regions,

HAVING REGARD TO the Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the activities of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (COM(2000) 625 final);

HAVING REGARD TO the decision of the European Commission on 6 October 2000 to consult the CoR on this subject in accordance with the first paragraph of Article 265 of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

HAVING REGARD TO the decision taken by its President on 7 February 2001 to instruct Commission 5 - Social Policy, Public Health, Consumer Protection, Research and Tourism - to draw up the relevant opinion;

HAVING REGARD TO its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission on certain Community measures to combat discrimination (COM(1999) 564 final)

Proposal for a Council Directive establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation (COM(1999) 565 final - 1999/0225 (CNS))

Proposal for a Council Directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin (COM(1999) 566 final - 1999/0253 (CNS)) and the

Proposal for a Council Decision establishing a Community Action Programme to combat discrimination 2001-2006 (COM(1999) 567 final - 1999/0251 (CNS)) (CdR 513/99 fin)¹;

HAVING REGARD TO its Opinion on the European Action Plan against Racism (COM (1998) 183 final) (CdR 369/98 fin)²;

HAVING REGARD TO the Draft Opinion (CdR 67/2001 rev. 1) adopted by Commission 5 on 16 July 2001 (rapporteur: **Mr Moore** (UK/ELDR, member of Sheffield City Council),

WHEREAS

- a. the overall picture of ethnic minority employment patterns in the EU shows ethnic minorities having lower economic activity rates, facing dramatically higher rates of unemployment, and segregation within the lowest paid jobs in the economy;
- b. as leading public sector employers and as administrators of civil society at the level of residents and citizens, regional and local authorities are important in effecting, measuring and participating in anti-racism projects and in the development of good practice;
- c. even national and EU strategies must gain the support of local and regional leaders, to maximise support and legitimacy in the context of the whole Member State and wider European society;
- d. preparing for enlargement is relevant not just from the standpoint of acquiring a clear overview of the current reality in candidate countries, but also to be prepared for the implications of enlargement with respect to possible increases in fears about migration, unemployment, etc.;
- e. full and unequivocal support for the EU Monitoring Centre on Racism & Xenophobia (EUMC) will further put into practice agreed principles to prioritise the fight against racism and xenophobia at both the national and international level;
- f. it is recognised that the components of research can include the descriptive, consequential and implementational elements.
- g. monitoring by the EUMC through collection, collation, analysis and dissemination of appropriate data will provide the EU with a better overview of the location and occurrence of racism and xenophobia, better formulation of strategies and methods to improve the comparability, objectivity, consistency and reliability of data at Community level, and increased co-operation with the national university research centres, NGOs and specialist advocacy groups/centres.

- h. the RAXEN information network can enable the EUMC to share good practice across Europe;
- i. human resources as an asset will be key in expanding the work of the EUMC in directions identified by the Management Board as a focus on priorities.

unanimously adopted the following opinion at its 41st plenary session of 14-15 November (meeting of 14 November).

The Committee of the Regions

1. welcomes the establishment and role of the EUMC since it considers that it is important to engage a broader coalition of people in the fight against racism, encourage changes in the way our societies and institutions are structured, bring about a change in attitudes, habits, and values and recognise the enlargement of the European Union as a critical issue.
2. considers that the EUMC's objective role in increasing awareness in its area of operations is vital to progress in the EU, and deserves the fullest support of the Commission, the Council, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.
3. recommends that the EUMC include regional and local authorities within the scope of its activities such that information is both disseminated to, and collected from, regional and local authorities. This could be done by:
 - i. contacts with National Focal Points being made specific to incorporate this;
 - ii. representation of the Committee of the Regions on the Management Board;
 - iii. an annual report of the EUMC to be presented to the Committee of the Regions to promote an ongoing dialogue with regional and local authorities on activities, knowledge and information sharing, participation in research and data collection.
4. recommends that the Management Board of the EUMC continue to build on work done thus far, by working towards:
 - i. promoting a clearer organisational identity and focus on priorities for the EUMC;

- ii. cascading this via greater involvement in input and advice in terms of strategy and direction;
 - iii. building on the Round Tables conducted thus far, by ensuring continuity, access for relevant national experts, and inclusion of informed NGO input in every Member State;
 - iv. developing the distributive functional competencies of the Board such as better representation from scientific/research, financial/budgetary, etc., experts;
 - v. strengthening communication and collaboration with national governments and the EU institutions;
 - vi. engaging more collaboratively in terms of depth and breadth, with various international bodies such as ECRI and with NGO networks, to complement and supplement work and maximise synergies of agenda/action to increase impact.
5. recommends that the EUMC commence the process of being adequately prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by candidate countries in the context of EU enlargement, and furthermore, should continue its legitimate and important work for an inclusive society and collaborate further with the EU institutions, for example in the following:
 - monitoring of Copenhagen Criteria, including anti-racism;
 - readiness of candidate countries to co-operate with the Centre.
 6. recommends that the membership of the Management Board be extended to include representatives from the Committee of the Regions.
 7. calls on the Member States, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council fully, unequivocally and publicly to support the important work of the EUMC.
 8. recommends that the EUMC be fully supported to expand its capacity for original research to include the consequential (implications for organisations, institutions, civil society, NGOs, governments in the EU with respect to health, housing, education, etc.) and the implementational (applied learning to action planning for the future and input into the design of best practice) element. This will also help to further engage NGOs and activists at the local level, in the work of the EUMC.
 9. recommends that the full operationalisation of RAXEN be given a high priority, as the monitoring remit of the EUMC is a very salient one - it is recognised that systematic collection of data and information is crucial to address the following issues with respect to racism and xenophobia:
 - persistent under-reporting or non-reporting of incidents due to a number of reasons;

- identifying the development of discriminatory trends and practices and the effectiveness of measures to combat them.
10. recommends that the EUMC website builds on the good work done thus far, and is further developed with respect to the following:
- i. clear corporate identity for the website;
 - ii. increased user-friendliness in form and layout;
 - iii. increased hyperlinks to document archives;
 - iv. increasing outreach to promote greater awareness of the website among target customers in order to maximise access;
 - v. consider ways to use the website to harness user feedback from target customer groups of the EUMC with respect to information, products and services.
11. reiterates the proposals adopted by the Committee of the Regions in its Opinion on 11 March 1999 on the European Action Plan Against Racism, and requests that they be implemented as agreed. These are:
- i. establishment of an inter-institutional contact group to co-ordinate and promote activities at a European level in conjunction with the EUMC;
 - ii. capacity building for the EUMC via RAXEN and equally a new cooperation between the Community institutions and the Committee of the Regions;
 - iii. greater resources to be allocated to European anti-racist activities and organisations or networks.
12. considers that the EUMC's work with monitoring and strengthening the Charter of European political parties for a non-racist society (which was presented at the Utrecht Conference in February 1998) should be encouraged and supported.
13. recommends that the current initiatives as supported by the EUMC via Round Tables, work with the media, and conferences, be extended to cover the activities of political parties at local and regional authority level.

14. urges Member States to collaborate with the EUMC in building a common approach to data and definitions to enable meaningful comparisons, collation and analysis.
15. recommends that the current external evaluation be expedited so that an interim evaluation report can be made available to the Executive Board of the EUMC, and within an appropriate timespan that enables the EUMC to initiate needed change in meeting the needs of enlargement and other challenges. Given that the Commission acknowledges that three years is not long enough to be able to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the Centre's activities, the CoR further recommends that an in-depth evaluation be planned for 2004, to enable a fairer and more comprehensive analysis of the Centre's activities.
16. recommends that staff continue to be provided with relevant training and development in communication/liaison skills, Commission procedures and media relations. Sound managerial input and advice will also help to foster realistic expectations to both internal and external stakeholders.
17. supports the recommendation in the Commission's report for the establishment of an internal Advisory Committee on Procurements and Contracts, which has to be confirmed by the Management Board.
18. recommends that recognised experts in the field of anti-racism and managing diversity be independently-selected for bilateral exchanges of information, that will serve as additional source of reliable and objective data for the work of the Centre.

Brussels, 14 November 2001.

The President

of the

Committee of the Regions

Jos Chabert

The Secretary-General

of the

Committee of the Regions

Vincenzo Falcone

¹ OJ C 226, 8.8.2000, p. 1

² OJ C 198, 14.7.1999, p. 48

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